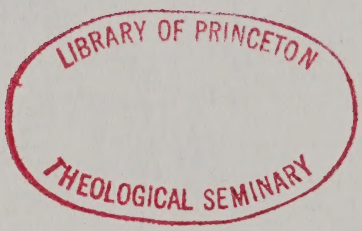

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Politics for Christians

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Politics for Christians

BY

William Muehl

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A Haddam *House Book*

ASSOCIATION PRESS · NEW YORK

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National Board of Young Men's Christian Associations

Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York 7, N. Y.

Library of Congress catalog card number: 56-6443

Printed in the United States of America

TO

Mrs. William P. Ladd

who exemplifies the best in Christian politics

Contents

1. Does Religion Mix with Politics? 3
2. Social Sources of Political Irresponsibility 11
3. The Politics of Moralistic Individualism 30
4. Christian Insight and Democratic Process 49
5. The Structure of Political Parties 74
6. Sources of Political Power 97
7. Joining a Party 121
8. Independent Politics 147
9. Some Current Local Issues 161
10. Church and State 173

Politics for Christians

Chapter 1

Does Religion Mix with Politics?

Several years ago a group of students from the Christian Association at Oberlin College made a field trip to Washington, D.C. They visited many of the centers of government and interviewed a number of the leaders of both political parties. During their conversation with one distinguished senator from the Midwest the latter expressed his gratification at seeing "Christian young people concerned about affairs of state." He reminded them that he had been a YMCA worker with American troops in World War I and went on to say that he was "still eager to advance the cause of Christ."

"Well, Senator," one of the party asked, "how do you relate your Christian faith to your stand against the United Nations and all programs of foreign aid?"

The senator, a rabid isolationist, replied more in admonition than anger.

"Son," he rumbled, "I never mix religion and politics. They just don't go together!"

The conviction that religion and politics must be kept separate is not peculiar to United States Senators. It reflects a point of view that is common among Americans generally.

To some extent our national attitude in this respect is camouflaged by the ritualistic manipulation of religious language in our political oratory and the formal invocation of God on most state occasions. The casual observer might easily conclude from these that our conviction is quite other than it actually is. But these are the merest gestures. If the men who make them were asked to elaborate on the relationship between their Christian faith and what they have just said, they would either make an outright disclaimer or fall back on some moralistic generalization that would be no more Christian than Hindu. Religion is often waved from the political platform along with motherhood and the American flag. But it is commonly regarded as having no more to do with practical politics than either of these other two.

Sometimes our prejudice against mixing religion and politics is expressed directly, as by the senator quoted above. I can remember hearing a famous Protestant clergyman refuse to preach on the importance of voting, on the ground that this kind of sermon "would degrade the high purpose of the pulpit." And a prominent layman in my home town once publicly rebuked his pastor for signing a petition dealing with school construction. This, said the irate parishioner, was "meddling in politics." Anyone with broad experience in either church affairs or politics could cite many instances of the same kind.

For the most part, however, our national dedication to the separation of religion and politics must be inferred from less explicit data. It manifests itself most often in men's responses in those situations which might seem reasonably to demand some correlation between the two. These responses take two general forms:

First, a willingness to discuss all aspects of the political process without any recourse to theology. It is not at all uncommon for analysts and commentators in this field to deal with the most basic questions of political philosophy with

no reference to the Christian view of man and his society. This cannot be attributed in all or even most cases to an antireligious bias in the mind involved. There is every reason to believe that many of those who most assiduously avoid mixing religion and politics are persons of undoubted Christian commitment. The implication of their neglect of Christian insight at this particular point, then, is quite clear. They are persuaded that there is no necessary relationship between the two.

Second, this same attitude is indicated more subtly by the effort to bring religion and politics together in a highly superficial way. It can be seen in the suggestion that there are some "moral issues" in politics, such as prohibition, vice control, and war and peace, which do involve serious religious questions. But it is also reflected in the allegation that while religion has something to say on all political matters, its comments properly deal only with "values" involved. It tells us, for example, that peace is better than war, that the Negro ought to be treated justly, and that employers should deal equitably with their workers. But, says this view, it has nothing to offer that can help us analyze complex problems or give substantial content to such words as "justice" and "equity."

Obviously the second of these two responses gives a much larger role to Christian faith than the first—and I do not mean to sound contemptuous of it. Immeasurable good has been done by men and women who have been inspired by moral generalizations. The idea that man should seek to promote human equality, peace, and fair play, for all of its naïveté, has underlain much of the most devoted public service in the history of mankind. Countless sensitive Christians have instinctively played responsible social roles without being able to give the explicitly theological reasons for so doing.

The weakness of this latter position is to be measured not

by its power to inspire, but by its ability to inform and guide what it has inspired. Those who enter the political arena armed with a religion that furnishes only general "values" are likely to be shocked by what they meet, confused by diverse mixtures of good and evil, and disillusioned by one betrayal after another. And the net result of such forays is often a hasty withdrawal by the forces of righteousness.

In terms of its ultimate effect, then, the view that the Christian faith enters the realm of politics only to pronounce blessings and invoke curses on good and evil causes is simply one more reflection of the conviction that religion and politics do not really mix; for it allows theology no interpretive function, gives it no chance to comment on the significant forces at work within and among men in their social context. In its own way, therefore, it excludes religion from its judgment of the political process.

It is difficult to find in history any defense of this kind of segregation. The great Christian theologians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, have had much to say about every aspect of man's existence. The best Christian thought has never been willing to exclude any area of life from the formulations of theology. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin all related the demands of the Christian faith to both the theory and practice of politics. If what they have to say on these subjects seems remote from what we know as politics today, this reflects the changes in the political process more than any change in the relevance of theology. One can find no justification for excluding politics from the realm of religious concerns, except in the protest theology of some of the dissenting or sect groups that sought to break with the tainted necessities of this world and establish a premillenarian ethic.

The necessity for relating the Christian faith to the political process is no less urgent today than in the past. If anything, it is more pressing. The obvious reason for saying this is, of course, the constantly increasing role of government in our

highly organized and integrated society. Scores of relationships which were only recently personal in character are now carried on through political channels. Many important responsibilities which people at one time bore themselves are now the province of government. The education of children, the care of the indigent, and the establishment of fair standards in many areas of our economic life are partially or completely administered by some arm of the state. This means that they have become political in the broadest sense of the word.

The individual's obligation to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and shelter the homeless has not been changed by delegating the power to do these things to some professional agency. Just as one is held legally responsible for the acts of his agents in business, so we are all morally responsible for the acts or defaults of our political officials. We cannot honestly plead the complexity of the situation and the remoteness of the actual deeds in extenuation of our failure to make proper political choices and decisions. We are the beneficiaries of the complexity of our society; and we are, therefore, the culprits when it behaves in an immoral fashion. Thus, there rests upon every Christian the obligation to see that his legal arm, the state, acts in a way that is consistent with his personal moral duty.

There is, however, a less obvious but equally compelling reason for being concerned with the implications of the Christian faith for contemporary politics. The political realm is one in which very dramatic changes are taking place today. It is, therefore, an area in which a high degree of communication is possible. That is to say, the profitable exchange of ideas is most likely to occur in discussions of those subjects on which the parties put real importance. When men are worried about some aspect of their lives, when they have seen old patterns change before their eyes, there develops within them an intense interest in what is taking place. This interest,

in turn, produces a willingness to listen, an open-mindedness, and an eagerness for instruction. The ability to talk about the Christian faith as it relates to these areas of uncertainty and confusion is invaluable in making an effective witness.

Thus, it is possible in our own time to give content and relevance to the Christian faith by relating it to man's deep concern with the rapid changes taking place in his political life. One need not rely on the theories of communication to prove this. It can be seen demonstrated clearly in the amazing effectiveness of Professor Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary as a writer and preacher. Men and women who have shown little or no interest in religion have been moved to profound changes in outlook by this remarkable man. Much of the secret of his power is to be found in his constant relating of Christian theology to the most pressing of our social, economic, and political problems. Audiences wrestle manfully to understand his theological language because they are motivated to attention by his brilliant political insights. This is much more than merely using the catchwords of one field to arouse interest in another. It is a demonstration that the substance of the Christian faith has meaning in every area of life; and this is a truth that people are eager to see in action.

What, then, has persuaded so many Americans that they cannot look to their Christian faith for help in understanding their complicated political responsibilities? This question is of much more than historic interest to us. The answer to it explains a great deal about the nature of the whole political process in the United States.

To some extent our notion that religion and politics do not mix grows out of the feeling that one is pure and the other corrupt, and that for this reason, if for no other, they cannot be brought into a creative relationship. Undoubtedly many who voice this opinion think of it as a logical extension of the separation of church and state. (More about this point

later.) A few must be simply reflecting a fear that religion will have some hard things to say about their brand of politics if the two ever get within hailing distance of one another!

For the most part, I am sure, the hesitancy of the average American when it comes to mixing theology and politics has a much more significant basis. It rests on a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the social process and the way in which this process touches and influences his own life.

The social process, the activities of men and institutions and their relations with one another, is the flux in which politics and theology come together. Both interact with the human environment in a constant give and take of influencing and being influenced. What men believe about political matters, what they believe about religion, and what they take to be the impact of one on the other—all these reflect their understanding of their environment. To the extent that they really comprehend what is happening around them, their religion and politics will be realistic and constructively related. To the extent that their interpretation of their world is faulty, their religion will be degraded, their politics neurotic, and the contact between them superficial.

The average American Christian does not comprehend the relevance of theology to politics because he is heir to a number of highly dramatic myths about the social order in which he lives. Most of these grew without cultivation in the rich soil of frontier primitivism. Some have been carefully tended by self-conscious interest groups to which they have seemed useful. Whatever their origin, these myths combine to make up a partially or wholly false picture of life in the United States. Wherever we turn, one of them is there representing itself as reality and tempting us to put false reliance on what seems to be hard fact.

When we seek to act on the assumption that the American social mythology shows us life as it really is, we are confused

and bruised at every turn. Our efforts to relate religion to politics are as fruitless as our attempts to make other social correlations, such as that of economics to psychology or cultural factors to marital instability. We are working with erroneous data and the results of our calculations are frequently wrong in consequence. These miscalculations are what have repeatedly led earnest Christians to ignore critical political opportunities and then go on a rampage about something of relatively little importance. They have produced the Prohibition party, the Christian Front, and myriad indignant, disorganized, and futile movements for civic "reform." They have brought to power scoundrels with enough guile to attend church and teach Sunday school. And they have driven from public service able leaders whose domestic lives were not satisfactory to their neighbors. Over and over again the zeal of honest Christian men has been harnessed to vehicles of sectarian moralism and vicious bigotry. Little wonder that we are tempted to cry in despair that religion and politics certainly do not mix!

It is imperative, therefore, that we begin this discussion of Christian political action with a consideration of the social attitudes that have produced so much confusion concerning it in the past. This is made necessary by much more than mere curiosity about historical origins. It is the first step toward clarifying our own points of view and reaching an understanding of those masses of Americans whose decisions make up our political record.

Chapter 2

Social Sources of Political Irresponsibility

In the late forties, *Life* magazine featured an article comparing Japan with the United States and contrasting the people of the two countries. The basic difference between them, the author suggested, lies in their conception of the individual's relationship to society. The Japanese thinks of himself primarily in his social context, as son, husband, employee, and citizen—and only secondarily as an individual. The American on the other hand, the article continued, regards himself chiefly as an individual and only incidentally as the bearer of diverse social responsibilities.

Whatever the accuracy of this analysis of the Japanese, the description of the American psychology has a great deal to commend it. We tend to judge ourselves by what we achieve as relatively independent persons and we expect others to do the same, for themselves and for us. We carry our social obligations with an air of *noblesse oblige,* more as actors *playing* son, husband, employee, and citizen than as dependent beings who are both creators and the products of our social roles.

Evidence of this attitude is not hard to find. It can be seen

in the casual quality that we give to what other cultures would regard as intimate relationships, our intense hostility toward such words as "socialized," "collective," and "planned." We are amused by the British willingness to stand in line and take turns, and by the German ability to march in step. We pride ourselves on the freedom with which we move across boundaries of class and convention.

Nowhere can the prevalence of our faith in rugged individualism be observed more dramatically than in those purveyors and interpreters of the national mythology, the mass media. Movies, radio, television, newspapers, and pulp fiction pour out an unending stream of "real life stories" in which Americans see themselves depicted *not as they are* but as they like to regard themselves. There is no space here to go into the dynamics of cultural myths. Suffice it to say that the products of Hollywood and the radio-television studios are to our time what the sagas, minstrels' songs, and folk tales were to other ages. They dramatize our own conception of ourselves.

It is in these projected daydreams that the image of the omnipotent individual stands out most clearly. In the western thriller he is the Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Davy Crockett, or any one of a number of brave fellows who heads the villains off at Eagle Pass and saves the day for virtue. Too often in the private-eye mystery he is the knight in a dirty trench coat who manages to protect everything from female honor to atomic secrets with nothing more helpful than the jagged top of a broken bottle.

At various levels of artistic quality the same theme is played over and over again. From the powerful tension of *High Noon* to the ludicrous banality of grade "C" quickies, the persistent melody recurs. The forces of law and order are helpless. For any one of many reasons they can do nothing to meet the developing crisis. Sometimes it is because of accidental factors. The bridge has been washed out or the

telegraph wires are down. At other times a value judgment is attached. The police are crooked or too incompetent to be trusted. For whatever reason, the good guy on a white horse must ride over plains and mountains, take on ten bad guys twice his weight, and pull victory from the literal precipice of defeat.

It is easy to laugh at such nonsense. To millions of Americans of all ages who never bother analyzing it, however, this kind of fairy tale holds the mirror up to life in the best tradition. And what does it show?

Society, it says, really does not exist as a significant factor in human affairs. Its institutions are corrupt or incompetent. They cannot be depended on in anything important. In the final analysis all that is worth doing is carried on by heroic individuals who manage to win through in spite of the fumbling interference of social forces. It is the strong man who shapes the destiny of the community. The latter does nothing for him and little for itself.

It is not suggested that this is an accurate picture of American life. Nor would the average viewer of these fantasies defend what they imply if he were pressed to analyze them. Even so, the endless repetition of their common thesis and the avidity with which they are accepted by millions of people indicate pretty clearly the powerful grip that the mythology of individualism has upon the subconscious minds of the uncritical. The strength of any such body of legends, like the force of superstition, lies in the extent to which it operates below the level of rational judgment and never gets called into critical evaluation.

Let us leave the realm of fantasy now and look at two illustrations of the way in which the psychology of rugged individualism works in real social situations.

A young man who has made a career of labor education was deeply troubled by the ambiguous attitude of workers toward their labor unions. They know they need the union,

he said, and when they are in trouble they come running to it for help. When their jobs are threatened they can't get to headquarters fast enough. But outside the plant, when everything is going smoothly for them, they are very likely not merely to neglect the union but to talk and vote anti-union, to participate in political and community programs that threaten the very life of their organization.

Here you see the rugged individualist mind at work. It is shrewd enough to recognize the value of collective security when its own status is threatened. However, this practical acceptance of the union as a convenience does not penetrate the sanctum in which the mythology of personal independence is enshrined. The very man who is most in need of organization in daily practice is likely to be the most vocally anti-organization in theory, and, more importantly, in those practical situations in which he is not able to discern the tie-up of his own interests to the principle at stake.

Here is another illustration. In 1951, President Harry Truman removed General Douglas MacArthur from his post as commander of the United States and United Nations forces in Korea because MacArthur had seemed unwilling to work co-operatively within the framework of the United Nations police action in that country.

When General MacArthur arrived in the United States after his removal, he was greeted by one of the most tremendous ovations ever given any American by his fellow countrymen. Throngs waited for him at the airports where he landed en route to Washington, people asked indignantly how the President "dared" fire this great man, and the Congress of the United States stood in wild acclaim when the general addressed a joint session. Observers with a good deal of experience in such matters were bewildered by the almost hysterical quality of the public reaction.

It is not difficult to understand this incident. Douglas MacArthur was not being hailed for himself alone, or even prin-

cipally. He was in that hour the Lone Ranger, the symbol of our rugged individualism. Think back for a moment to the nature of our situation in 1951. We were engaged in a difficult "police action" at the other end of the world. We were not doing very well at it. Our troops were being held or even driven back by people for whom we had never learned much respect. We were not winning in the great tradition of San Juan Hill and the Rough Riders. We were involved in this "mess" with a group of other nations with whom it was necessary to consult, and many of them were highly critical of what they regarded as our impetuous conduct of the fighting. It was a highly undignified and frustrating situation.

Then up spoke Douglas MacArthur. Let's head 'em off at Eagle Pass, he said. Let's cut loose from this mass of diplomatic hesitation and go it alone. This was what the American people had been longing to hear. It spoke comfortably to their belief that the good guys always win if they just trust their own strength. It blamed our failures on that symbol of interdependence, the United Nations. And it fitted neatly into what we had learned about the nature of the world from the movies!

Here again the mythology of rugged individualism was at work. You do not accomplish important things, it said, by working through the concert of nations. You get them done because you are "the good guys" and you can outsmart the villains. And Douglas MacArthur became the hero of the day.

SOURCES OF THE MYTH

The origins of the mythology of individualism are not hard to trace. This new world was colonized at a time when Europe was in the grip of great social upheavals. The cultural, economic, and religious life of that continent had been torn apart by dramatic social changes. The Renaissance had freed art from its subjection to static values. It had set men's cre-

ative impulses free to find self-expression. The emergence of the middle class and a nascent capitalism had broken up the relatively structured socio-economic order and bade the individual exploit his own skills for his own gain. The Reformation had seemed to give a theological blessing to these other revolts. Man, it was understood to say, does not need the church, the sacraments, the hierarchy of learning and authority for his salvation. He is saved by the grace of a God with whom he can enjoy a personal relationship independent of the institutions of organized religion.

These three historic movements were essentially the revolt of the individual against ancient and confining patterns, and the assertion of man's need to express himself through what he thinks and does. Some of the most vital and radical of the rebels made up the basis of our present society. Those who came here were not the reluctant heirs of the revolt of others. They were among the more enthusiastic and uncompromising of the individualists. It was their very refusal to give in to the power of the existing social, political, and religious institutions that made them leave all, risk everything, and found a new nation.

In Europe the radical impulses of the individualistic mood were to a large extent tamed by the passage of time and the confining force of long-established structures of power and prestige. In America there was nothing to limit the proliferation of the myth of individual omnipotence. It put down roots on jagged Vermont hillsides where only a hero could survive. It spread to the vast plains where isolation was a necessity if nothing else. It paid off in fortunes for the men who could disappear into the wilderness of the northwest and emerge with a caravan of furs. Social individualism was a fact of life. Economic individualism was highly profitable. Brooding over them both, chaplain to the new day, was the popular interpretation of Reformation theology which came to be expressed in our own time in the words, "I can worship God

better alone in the woods than in a church with all of those hypocrites!"

Obviously the physical, social, and economic conditions that had made this extreme individualism necessary did not last long. The lone trapper was replaced by the wagon train, which in its turn gave way to the railroad. The trading post yielded to the general store. The general store was absorbed by the great chains. But the myth had taken root. It had entwined itself with the nation's folklore. It had become so colorful, so attractive to the eye of adventure, so useful in various ways, that it was transplanted again and again and carefully tended long after time and change had eroded the soil of its original growth.

There is another aspect of American life that contributed much to the growth of our intense individualism and which still accounts for a great deal of its staying power. That element is the amazing mobility that we have always enjoyed. The most obvious kind is, of course, simple physical mobility. In the early days of our growth every man had constantly open to him the possibility of leaving an unsatisfactory environment and seeking a better one in the West. Even today, long after the frontier has closed, people who cannot make a go of a particular situation can either pick up and move to another or continue to live in the same place but commute for employment, education, friendship, or recreation. The automobile has given all of us the ability to be very selective about our surroundings. We have many families, for example, in which the home is in one town, the children's school in another, the husband's job in a third, and the wife's social group in a fourth.

Less obvious but equally important is our social mobility. Unless we are members of minority groups against which discrimination is practiced, we move freely up and down the ladder of status and economic well-being. The point at which we are born has little bearing on the one at which we will

marry, grow old, and finally die. The possibility of progress from log cabin to White House may be overemphasized, but it does reflect an important kind of mobility in American life.

Finally, we are all heirs of what I shall refer to as psychological mobility. By this I mean the ability to escape from our routine lives and familiar surroundings by a variety of devices which play upon our imaginations. Radio, television, and movies lift the average person out of the rut of his humdrum existence and let him roam through an imperium in which he enjoys myriad adventures and hobnobs with the high and mighty. This, too, is a kind of freedom, a means of getting away from what one dislikes or cannot control.

Thus, the average American is steeped in the psychology of an intense individualism. It was born in a time when it reflected the conditions and necessities of his life. It sprang from the mixing of social, cultural, and theological rebellion in a physical environment that provided the space and mobility for the full development of a dramatic individualistic mythology. It has continued to thrive in spite of its variance with the facts of life because of a combination of social utility, wishful thinking, and continued mobilities of diverse kinds.

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF INDIVIDUALISM

We come now to the question: What are the consequences of our intense individualism for the social order in which we live?

First, the average American tends to ignore or deny the *real* importance of social structures and processes.

When a man is steeped in the psychology of rugged individualism he rarely develops any mature appreciation of his involvement in the society of which he is a part. It seldom occurs to him, except in crises, that he is inextricably bound up in myriad social relationships and complex communities.

His feeling that he will be judged by his personal achievement, saved by his personal faith, and always be free to move from one context to another horizontally and vertically—these assurances make him careless of the social structure and the forces that create, destroy, and rebuild it. In his own mind he is quite apart from all this. As one rather caustic comment puts it, "The average American doesn't believe in society. He knows that it is just a figment of the Socialist imagination!"

The natural outgrowth of this sense of detachment is a blithe indifference to social movements and institutions. We tend to feel that we can take or leave them at will. Whatever interest we choose to cultivate in them is supposed to be a revelation of our civic-mindedness, something for which we expect praise. We wonder why some people get excited about problems of race, politics, and economics. This kind of interest seems more than a little gauche and we put them down as fanatics. We will certainly admit that co-operation among men is a "good" thing. Sometimes it may even be a necessary thing. But that interdependence is of the essence of human life itself would be regarded by most of us as an extreme or meaningless statement.

Illustrations of this spirit in operation come readily to mind; for example, the experience of the discouraged woman who talked about the difficulty of organizing a P.T.A. group in one suburban area of a large city. The parents she approached were not the least bit interested in such an organization. They listened courteously enough to her suggestion, agreed that such concerted action would help the local school system do a better job, and expressed the hope that she would be successful in her efforts. But, most of them concluded, they were going to be in that community only temporarily and did not want to get involved!

The same obstacle has been found to impede the growth of consumers' co-operatives in the United States. This move-

ment is intended to help people with limited incomes plan their purchasing in such a way as to get the most in quality and quantity for their dollars. In other countries the co-ops have proven that they can save families several hundred dollars a year on their food and clothing bills. In America, except in cases that cannot be regarded as typical, co-ops have had tough sledding. Why? Because the very people who stand to gain the most from them are not willing to admit that they *need* an organization of the kind that will save them a few hundred dollars a year. They expect that within a short time they will have moved into an income bracket at which a few hundred dollars is not worth the trouble it takes to shop at the co-op stores! There are numerous careful surveys of co-op development problems to back up this statement.

One more illustration. The president of one of the UAW locals of the C.I.O. once commented on the lack of able men who will accept responsible positions in their unions. The workers who would make the best officers, he complained, expect that they will be promoted into management positions in the near future. Consequently they have no interest in taking on the burdens of elective office in a union. And, he concluded with a wry grin, more often than not their expectations are justified.

One might reasonably expect that the hard facts of life would in time make it clear to the rugged individualist that he is deeply immersed in the human problems of his society and that he cannot escape them by virtue of his vertical and horizontal mobility, that he is conditioned and influenced at every turn by the needs, demands, and abilities of others. To some extent, of course, this happens. More and more Americans are beginning to accept the reality of social processes and to seek means of working *through* rather than in spite of them. The rapid growth of the labor movement and the increasing importance of various forms of social planning indicate this.

In this matter, as in most others, men are able to avoid

facing some unpleasant truth if they want to badly enough. Obviously a great many people in the United States want very badly to ignore the hard fact of their social involvement. At least, they want to ignore the implications of the fact.

George Jean Nathan, the drama critic, has called attention to a striking symptom of this urge in the contemporary drama. In a great many modern plays, Nathan pointed out in an article in the *New Yorker* some years ago, the leading characters are strongly split personalities. Bartenders who dispense free philosophy, bank robbers who love birds, and prostitutes with hearts of gold have made increasingly frequent appearances on the boards. Nathan commented rather bitterly that he was getting sick and tired of drama revolving around such riffraff.

This distinguished critic was describing accurately a phenomenon of the modern stage when he called attention to all of this. But he was in error when he seemed to imply that the dramatists were making these characters up out of their imaginations. These shabby "heroes" are significantly symbolic of the very thing we have been discussing. They are human beings who have surrendered to the complexity of life and come to terms with social necessity in a thoroughgoing fashion. They have persuaded themselves, however, that their existence is divided into two parts. One is the public personality—what they feel compelled to be by the necessities of their social roles. The other is the private personality—that area of life in which they can be what they really want to be, unconditioned by practical consideration of diverse needs.

I am not really myself, say these characters, when I sell rotgut, rob banks, or engage in commercial "love" affairs. These things are forced on me by society and my need for money. I am only myself when I am dispensing philosophy, feeding my birds, or sending the beardless youth back to his lonely mother. It is in these moments that I reveal my inmost per-

sonality. And it is by this inmost personality that I expect to be judged both by other men and by God.

This is simply another means of denying the validity of the social process. Go ahead and give in to anything that it demands, says this point of view. You can surrender completely because what happens in this realm of your life is unimportant. Society does not really exist. It is only a bad dream, a figment of the collectivist imagination. It does not count at all.

So, you see, both the refusal to make any concessions to one's dependence on the social order *and* the willingness to be formed completely by it can be symptoms of the same thing, a profound disbelief in the reality of society. Both assert that the only ultimately meaningful thing in life is the *private* personality of the individual.

The second social consequence of our intense individualism is the abundant growth of and popular reliance on *artificial* social structures.

A commentator on the American scene has said that the United States in its brief history has fostered more rootless communities and fraternal orders than all the rest of the world's cultures combined. It is impossible to judge the accuracy of this statement, but the general truth of it is easily proved. Go into any city, town, or hamlet in the United States today and you will be struck by the tremendous number of lodges, service clubs, fraternal orders, and secret societies that it boasts. Apparently many of our citizens spend a good deal of time each year eating lunch, carrying banners, wearing plumed hats, or mouthing pretentious liturgies on behalf of some abstract principle or local charity. Even the sophisticated precincts of university centers are not immune to this particular malady. Cropped heads bow every spring around ritual candles as otherwise cynical and urbane upperclassmen induct harassed initiates into the resounding mysteries of good old . . . name your own Greek letters!

It is quite clear that not all of these various organizations

can be put into one category. Some of them claim no function at all beyond horseplay and good times. Others actually do a great deal of service work for numerous good causes. But in one respect most of these clubs and orders are alike. They are symptoms of the members' unconscious need to belong to meaningful social groups. They are the rugged individualist's answer to the deep hunger of his spirit for some association with other people in purposeful activity. No man can live entirely to himself. We reach out for fellowship and mutual aid. We long to feel the pressure of an arm against our arm as we move along through life. And the multitude of fraternal orders that abounds in the United States manifests the need that Americans feel for a sense of belonging.

Notice, however, one very important fact about the groups to which the average man is willing to surrender his individuality. They are in important respects artificial in character. They are not made up of all those who have an interest in advancing the cause to which the order pays lip service. They are, rather, selective groups, more often than not exclusive groups. In most cases the fraternity was formed first, and then a cause was seized upon as an excuse for being. Membership is always limited in some way. Professional standards may be applied where they have no real relevance to the ideals avowed. Religious, racial, economic, and social barriers are almost always raised in order to control personnel. Even a casual investigation of such organizations will show quite clearly that their standards and procedures are only indirectly related to the causes they profess to espouse.

There is more to such artificial groups than the evidence they furnish of the American's natural human need for fellowship and a cause to which to devote himself. They reveal with dramatic clarity our determination to find that fellowship and meaning in groups *over which we have a pretty complete control,* as they touch our lives. Our widespread participation in them says in effect: We need to belong. We need to feel

that we are a part of societies that are working for worthwhile ends. But we are going to belong only to the extent that it is convenient and rewarding to belong. We are going to choose our companions, our methods, and our aims. We are going to remain free to participate as much or as little as we please.

You see, when a man gets into a labor union he is involved in an organization that touches him at critical points: his status and his livelihood. When he gets into a political party he is playing for keeps, for parties deal with the stuff of which laws and government are made. When he joins a P.T.A. he has to sit next to anyone who happens to have a child in school. He faces the prospect of being outvoted and controlled by persons whose manners and personalities are distasteful to him. When he joins such groups as these he cannot put absolute limits on his expenditure of time, such as every other Thursday from eight to twelve. He finds that he is up to his ears in work and responsibility—because such groups are doing important jobs which make their own time schedules, not running through pretty liturgies which have been carefully arranged to leave plenty of time for the refreshments afterward!

Obviously it is impossible to talk of artificial groups without a great deal of oversimplification. There is no such thing as a discernible line between artificiality and reality where social groups are concerned. The difference is a more-or-less measure, not black and white. At the extremes these distinctions are easy to spot. A family is clearly a genuine social group. But when one begins to move toward the center, the distinction disappears and the problem of classification becomes almost impossible. The important thing for our purposes, however, is to bear in mind that there *are* real and artificial communities and that we are all tempted to forsake the grueling and inconvenient demands of the former and find our social satisfactions in the false activity of the latter.

It is important to remember this so that we may understand the possibilities and limitations of involvement in particular communities and institutions; for the fraternity which gives only the illusion of social reality gives also only the illusion of accomplishment and satisfaction. Millions of Americans spend time and money every year in groups that profess high ideals but lack the ability to advance them in any way. Let's look at a few illustrations of this sort of thing.

When I was in college my classmates and I formed a great many political societies for the purpose of making dramatic changes in the government and social structure of the United States. We were quite clear about our objectives. We did not want to discuss and theorize. We wanted action. So we got up petitions about various matters, held noisy rallies on the library steps, and sent off delegations to talk with members of the state legislature about particular political matters. This activity gave us the illusion of real political force.

Then one day a group of us were talking with an upstate senator about a pure food law that was pigeonholed in his committee. He was polite to us for a bit. As we pressed our demands that he release this important bill, he lost his patience. Finally he gave us a cold look and asked, "How old are you kids?"

As he suspected, we were all under twenty-one. Then he inquired with nasty courtesy, "And from what counties of this state do you come?"

Again he had us. Of the group of ten students, only three lived in the state of Michigan!

Do you see his point? Why should a man who depends for his political life on the votes of a few hundred farmers in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan care about the political views of a group of minors none of whom was eligible to vote, only three of whom would ever be able to vote in his state, and none of whom lived or was ever likely to live in his district?

College students have every right to form political groups. They ought to study the political process and understand the issues and problems that are going to face them when they graduate. But when they undertake to influence national or state policy by firing off petitions representing no voters and forty-eight different states, they sadly misunderstand the way in which democracy works.

Take another example of this same thing. A former student of mine spent a year on leave working for the World Federalist movement. When he returned we discussed his work. After some defensiveness and hedging he finally admitted that he regarded the year as a waste of time. Why? Well, because in his own words: "What's the point in selling World Federation to nice groups of politically inactive dowagers when the men who are going to make or break the movement are getting their orders in the back room of a tavern?"

One final illustration. A young woman with whom I had been active in a number of community projects once confided to me that she was a Socialist. But, she went on to say, she always voted the Republican ticket. Why? Because she felt sure that the Republican party would give the country a more efficient and businesslike socialism than the Socialists, who in her opinion were all either impractical intellectuals or unimaginative proletarians!

The young woman, in common with most of the rest of us, found it difficult to relate her means to her objective. She wanted to see the establishment of a particular kind of socio-economic system. But she wanted to work through a political party that is dedicated to preventing the advent of just such a system, because the people in that party seem more respectable and hardheaded. So she set up an artificial category, Republican Socialist, of which she is, so far as I know, the only member.

When we discuss artificiality in terms of secret societies

and fraternal orders it is not difficult to understand the social ineffectiveness of these structures. Unfortunately, however, the human tendency to take refuge from reality in hand-fashioned committees does not confine itself to such self-conscious creations. It appears, and I think much more significantly, in the growth of suburban residential areas made up entirely of one economic and educational class of people. Such areas have been developing rapidly in the United States since the advent of the automobile. With the mass building projects that have arisen since the close of World War II, we find this whole process greatly intensified.

At one time most communities of any size embraced a real cross section of the national population so far as social groups are concerned. The doctor and the lawyer did not live on the same block with the factory hand. The farmer lived outside of the town. But proximity and dependence on the same stores, schools, and political units assured a great deal of mingling. Professional men and laborers, farmers and townspeople, came together weekly or daily in a variety of natural and informal contacts. These contacts provided opportunity for a great deal of exchanging of ideas. They enabled men to know one another as whole persons, not just as units in a social grouping. The lawyers' views on political questions conditioned the farmers' feelings. And the schoolteachers' training in the principles of education could be communicated subtly to those who had no background of their own in the field. In all of these relationships there was going on the shaping of attitudes and ideals which made for some sort of integrated group life.

Today, however, there are masses of Americans who never see a doctor except when they are sick, who have no opportunities to talk with lawyers, teachers, and farmers except under deliberately contrived conditions. In fact, in a great many communities there is a startling homogeneity in every-

thing from economic bracket to ethnic background. Hundreds of mass-built housing projects all over the United States have been taken over by persons with the same kinds of abilities, prejudices, and aspirations.

As a result of this sameness, there is in such areas a lack of cross-fertilization. Instead of a diversity to breed tolerance and flexibility, there is a unanimity which intensifies old passions. The men and women who most need leadership must find it in the more aggressive members of their own limited groups, while other communities have more skilled and educated people than they can use. Laborer lives cheek by jowl with laborer, doctor lives across the street from merchant and lawyer. And there grows up the kind of separation that can eventually lead to suspicion and even hatred.

These, too, are artificial communities, communities which have not grown up in response to the organic relationship of needs and skills, but which have been created by the desire and ability of men to surround themselves with those who share their own accents and tastes. It is too early to assess with any accuracy the long-range results of this kind of artificiality. It will probably tend to rectify itself in time, but for the moment it is one more of those social conditions in which American political patterns are forming and in which Christian political action must take place.

Briefly, then, this is the background against which the rest of our discussion must develop. A variety of historical factors has combined with our phenomenal mobility to make Americans an intensely individualistic people. We like to think of ourselves as independent of one another and of the social institutions and processes within which we live. So strong is this desire that instead of awakening to reality in the face of modern complexity, we respond in neurotic fashion by trying to divide life into the important, that is, personal moral realm,

and the unimportant, that is, social and political area. As a result of this self-deception we cannot really understand the significance of basic social structures, and we try to play our social roles through a variety of artificial communities.

Chapter 3

The Politics of Moralistic Individualism

The tendency of the average American to ignore or deny the reality of society inevitably affects the political life of the nation in many ways. Politics is one of the mechanisms by which the social order organizes and governs itself. The political patterns of any community are formed in response to what its members take to be their common problems, opportunities, and responsibilities. Whatever leads to a faulty or inadequate social analysis will naturally produce political standards irrelevant to the facts of life.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the traditions of moralistic individualism in which the American mind has been steeped. We saw there that a combination of factors has made us eager to interpret history primarily in terms of the vitality, wisdom, and moral stature of rugged individuals. The notion that one person plus one person adds up to anything more complex than two persons is repugnant to us.

The impact of this outlook on our political habits is a never failing source of amazement to foreign observers and the cause of endless confusion for most Americans. The next step in our discussion of Christian political responsibility will be

an examination of some attitudes toward politics which are characteristic of the majority of voters in the United States.

Unfortunately, politics is no more susceptible to easy analysis than any other realm of life. The relationship of our intense individualism to the patterns of political activity forms a complex in which it is difficult to find an unraveling end. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we shall simply have to admit in advance to a degree of oversimplification and set out the major components of the problem in linear fashion.

PERSONALITY POLITICS

In an issue published shortly after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Time* reported that a prosperous businessman of its acquaintance had responded to the news of that event with the words, "Thank God, that's over!"

While few Americans were inclined to echo these bitter words, there is no doubt that for millions of our people the social changes grouped under the words "New Deal" were simply extensions of the personality of one man. In dramatically different words the friends and foes of that revolution in our national life expressed their similar understanding of it. Those who had found jobs after years of unemployment or had seen their farms saved from the auctioneer's hammer attributed their deliverance to "F.D.R." Those who saw taxes rise, unions organized, and business subjected to increasing regulation were equally certain that their afflictions could be blamed on "that man in the White House."

Americans have always tended to talk politics in terms of personalities. Students of the labor and agrarian unrest of the latter half of the nineteenth century, for example, have repeatedly pointed out that very few of the leaders of this turbulence called into judgment the social and economic institutions out of which it grew. In most cases they contented

themselves with stormy denunciations of the "bad guys" in Wall Street or Washington whose personal greed had caused them to abuse their power. In foreign affairs we have been more responsive to suggestions that we "Hang the Kaiser!" than to more abstract motivations. The deflationary crisis of the 1930's could, at the time, be fully explained by the man in the street in a simple two-word formula—"Hoover Depression." And when the British people voted Winston Churchill out of office hard upon the heels of his amazing performance as wartime prime minister, the United States could hardly believe its eyes or control its wrath. The defeat of Germany and the person of Churchill were that intimately linked in our minds.

It is much easier to laugh at such oversimplifications in the past than it is to avoid the same mistake today. Those who would attribute every error in American foreign policy to Reds in the State Department are guilty of similar thinking. So also are those at the other end of the political spectrum who put the whole blame for the Communist hysteria of the past few years on Senator Joseph McCarthy, as though an inherently tolerant and liberal-minded American people had been misled into unnatural excesses by this one individual.

These are all manifestations of the good-guy–bad-guy orientation applied to politics. Problems of amazing complexity are dismissed or interpreted as reflecting only the character traits of particular men or groups. In the preceding chapter we discussed the origin of this view of life. Let us ask now: What are the practical political consequences of our traditional emphasis on the role of personalities in history?

Neglect of Issues

In the days immediately preceding the Republican nominating convention in the summer of 1952, a prominent liberal leader expressed the hope that Senator Robert A. Taft would get the G.O.P. nod for President. Asked why he held such a

thing to be desirable in view of his own opinions, he replied:

"Taft is a man with strong convictions on most of the important issues facing the country today. He will campaign on the basis of those convictions, not on the basis of his popularity. This will give the American people a chance to declare themselves on a number of significant principles about which their feelings have long been in doubt."

This was pretty idealistic talk for one with experience in politics. On the record it is hard to prove that the American people have a very strong desire to declare themselves on principles. They think and talk politics in terms of men, not issues. Where voters in many other countries let their views on substantial questions dictate their choice of candidates, in the United States the average citizen lets his choice of candidates dictate his views on substantial questions.

This is by no means the invariable rule. Dramatic issues which touch the vital interests of the voter often thrust themselves so persistently before him that he cannot ignore their implications where his ballot is concerned. All of any President's popularity would not save him from rejection if his policies fostered a serious depression. Nor would any aspiring candidate have to worry much about his lack of political "oomph" if he could show that he had perfected a plan to give all citizens a six-month vacation with pay every year.

By and large, however, in the thousands of local, county, and state elections that occur between the great national contests, personalities dominate issues. Men are elected to office because they are known to be "good guys," "regular fellows," and "sound businessmen." Once in office they proceed to make myriad small and large decisions on everything from road construction to fiscal policy, decisions which taken together make up the patterns of life in the United States.

Thus an election in America rarely constitutes a referendum on policy. It seldom gives anyone a mandate to enact a substantial program. Like the garrulous fellow who did not

know what he thought until he spoke, the average voter does not know where he stands on most public questions until his chosen candidate makes a speech on the subject. His convictions then can be counted on to obtain only so long as he likes and trusts the man who articulated them.

Government by Disintegration

In 1952, Dwight Eisenhower was elected to the Presidency in a landslide vote. Men and women of both major parties united to make him one of the nation's most popular political figures. But they gave him such a frail Congressional majority that the health of our older senators became a matter of daily political interest. Then in 1954, in spite of "Ike's" pleas and in spite of a reasonable record of accomplishment, these same people put the Democratic party in control of both House and Senate.

This is one illustration of the kind of political disintegration that occurs when people overestimate the power of individuals to dominate history. And it is merely one of many such incidents in the American political picture.

Our people think nothing of putting the executive branch of government in the hands of one party and the legislative branch in the hands of the other. If there were a third party of any importance on the scene, we should undoubtedly have many three-way splits. We are persuaded that government is just a collection of "guys" who get together to make decisions. Their political labels are unimportant. Very few Americans have any conception of political parties as the bases of policy making and integration in government.

As a result, we are continually frustrating our own desires and putting our elected officials in an impossible position. We support men because they are attractive personalities, without serious reference to their convictions, and then feel betrayed when they turn out to be in favor of all the things we disapprove. We vote for a Republican for United States Sen-

ator in one election, two years later vote for a Democrat, and are outraged when they faithfully cancel one another out on every roll call!

Political leaders in the United States are very often afraid to present integrated programs to the electorate. They know that they will be held to any promises they make, without being given any assurance of a working majority in their administration. It is safer and easier, therefore, to make generalizations and count on personalities to turn out the vote.

Socially Oriented Party Structure

Recently an acquaintance of mine was recommended for election to the governing council of his chosen party. It was pointed out to the nominating committee that he was a loyal member, intelligently familiar with town problems, and a hard worker.

The members of the committee admitted the truth of all this. But, they pointed out, his social contacts were quite outside the groups from which the party drew its heaviest support. Needless to say, he was not even nominated once this devastating fact had been unearthed!

Such an incident is symptomatic of another important aspect of our personality-oriented politics. Men are chosen for leadership within parties and in government because of their personal popularity. What they believe is often regarded as unimportant. In a small town recently a widely known young attorney was nominated for the Board of Finance by the Democratic party. When notified of this honor he confessed with considerable embarrassment that he had always thought of himself as a Republican and had, indeed, always voted that ticket. Not one bit taken aback, the Democratic leaders airily announced that his "personal opinions" were no concern of theirs. They wanted a popular candidate and he was their man!

Because of our traditional emphasis on personality, a large

part of the success of a politician depends on his contacts. Since these contacts are very often made most effectively within the framework of social, fraternal, ethnic, and religious societies, such groups often become the core of party organizations. Far more decisions on political policy and personnel than one cares to believe are made in the clubhouses, church halls, and recreation centers of our communities.

It is very easy to think of this as the result of deliberate plotting. Some of it is. For the most part, however, the significance of religious and other groups in our political life arises more or less naturally as these become the social settings in which "contacts" are made. If Jones is a key figure in his party because he commands the affection and support of the Anglo-Saxon Fencing Society, the things for which Jones stands within the party will quite logically reflect the attitudes and values of his fellow fencers. This need not represent either a corrupt bargain or subtle back-scratching. It can as easily be the result of the psychological conditions in which Jones's influence was generated.

In time, of course, these relationships become self-conscious and carefully cultivated. The patterns formed by them begin to have strength in their own right. If the Anglo-Saxon Fencers make a habit of rallying behind Jones and the Sons of Simon throw their support regularly to Smith, a kind of circular movement is set up. The A.S.F. become known as Democrats, let us say, while the S.O.S. are admittedly Republican. Thus, only Democrats join the one and Republicans the other.

This is, of course, a much oversimplified description of what occurs, but the principle is accurately stated. Instead of being oriented around issues and social philosophies, political parties, especially at the grass roots, tend to be dominated by nonpolitical considerations.

As a result, parties are themselves badly divided. Men who come together because they are Roman Catholics or Southern

Methodists, Elks or Moose, have little basis on which to find common ground when some necessity arises for taking positions on substantial matters. A study of American political attitudes revealed, for example, that in many communities the Democratic party was more strongly in favor of Senator Joseph McCarthy than were the Republicans. And all over the nation Republicans who "united" behind President Eisenhower often revealed far less enthusiasm for many parts of his program than did their Democratic opponents.

We like to say that politics makes some strange bedfellows. It is probably as accurate to say that bedfellows make strange politics!

"CHRISTIAN STATESMANSHIP"

In our discussion of personality politics we saw that the first error of moralistic individualism in politics is its overemphasis on the role of individual character and vitality in determining the course of history. Its second serious mistake, to which we turn now, is its effort to apply to all political action what might be called the "means test"; that is to say, evaluation in terms of intention and method rather than effectiveness and objective. Let us begin with a specific illustration of what this means in practice.

Some years ago the editors of a magazine published by one of the largest Protestant denominations decided to honor an American politician as "Christian Statesman of the Year." After much thought they chose for this designation Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, the Dixiecrat candidate for President in 1948.

Truly remarkable was the principal reason given to support this choice. Governor Thurmond, it appears, is a total abstainer. He neither drinks, himself, nor allows alcohol to be served in his home!

At first hearing, one could be disposed to dismiss this

incident as nothing more than the quaint expression of a provincial morality. But it would be unwise to do so. The selection of Governor Thurmond on the basis of his stand against liquor is fully in keeping with the traditions of Protestant individualism that we have been discussing.

One might suppose that the qualities that make a man a "Christian Statesman" would be directly related to statesmanship. It is not unreasonable to expect that when one reaches into the political barrel and comes up with a shining example of Christianity in politics, this paragon will have something to teach us about the meaning of faith, hope, and love in public affairs. If Governor Thurmond had been chosen for his espousal of policies that advanced the cause of brotherhood, lightened the burdens of the afflicted, and furthered the stability of the community, his nomination for so exalted a designation would be understandable.

Is it not quite to the point to suggest that the basis on which the governor was actually chosen as "Christian Statesman" could as easily have been used as the excuse for naming him "Christian Lawyer" of the year?

Here again is the individualist's rejection of the reality of the social order. Politicians are praised not for *what* they stand for in public life, but for the *manner* in which they stand for it. Policies, principles, achievements—the points at which they really touch the community and change it for good or ill—these things do not count. They are merely shadows cast across a mirage. A man may stand for imperialism, race hatred, or fiscal insanity, provided he stands for them without staggering!

It is heartening to hear that Senator So-and-So preaches in his church once every year. But it would be more heartening to hear that he had decided to stop denouncing the "niggers and kikes" on the floor of the Senate!

The Congress of the United States and the legislative bodies of the land are dotted with incompetent and unprin-

cipled men who draw most of their support from earnest Christians who regard them as good husbands, loving fathers, and pleasant neighbors. The fact that they use their political positions to work against everything that their good Christian supporters ought to be *for* is a source of regret for the latter, but seldom anything more effective.

Perhaps the most damning indictment of our addiction to means and neglect of ends in politics is still the one penned so many years ago by Lincoln Steffens in his famous "Shame of the Cities." In this series of magazine articles the famous muckraker portrayed the unbelievable ineptitude and irrelevance of countless political reform groups. He saw sound businessmen, good church-goers, and faithful husbands set to work straightening out problems that they were not prepared to handle. With relentless patience he watched them fumble, misjudge, quit, or give in to corruption far worse than they had set out to correct.

Their failures, and in many cases resultant personal tragedies, were not the consequence of incompetence or dishonesty. They grew, rather, out of the inability of these men and their supporters to understand that *what* happens in the community is as important as the spirit in which it happens; that social evils are not eradicated by simply modifying the motivations of leaders; that the best intentions in the world can come together in such a way as to generate degradation and despair.

Steffens found that when the voters oust a "corrupt politician" and put an "honest man" in his place *without changing the social conditions that created the opportunity for corruption,* they simply put impossible pressures on the honest man and force the corruption to find new channels through which to move.

The tendency of Americans to equate political morality with means rather than ends makes it very difficult for them to learn this truth. If employers exploit their workers, we are

inclined to attribute this to their personal greed and urge them to improve their characters. The idea that the exploitation may be inevitable under the economic circumstances and that these latter had better be changed is repugnant to us. If a political leader abuses his power, we scold and give the power to another man. When he, too, overreaches himself, we feel betrayed. Is there no one we can trust?

When Americans equate political virtue with what is traditionally known as *personal* morality, when they become so preoccupied with means that they lose sight of ends, they deprive themselves of the standards by which to evaluate the actual social impact of any proposal or event. This leads to political frustration.

"COUNSELS OF RIGHT-THINKING MEN"

One of the less obvious political results of the good-guy–bad-guy conception of life is the way in which it tends to confuse us about the operation of the democratic process. It very often leads us to look with dismay and even contempt upon the creative tensions by which decisions are made in a liberal social order. It does this in three principal ways:

First, by indoctrinating us with the idea that the dynamic of life is the vitality of the individual, it gives us a strong sense of uneasiness about any kind of group action. We tend to regard it as the means by which inept, slothful, or crafty men confound the divine plan and seek to get things for themselves that could never be gained by their own initiative and talent.

When we read in the newspapers that a labor union is lobbying for the passage of favorable legislation or urging some administrative policy advantageous to its members, we are inclined to feel that this is "undemocratic." Our reaction is likely to be much the same when businessmen seek tariff changes or minority groups ask legal protection against job

discrimination. Our values are often closely akin to those of the naïve high school student who felt that it was improper for him to vote for himself in a class election! (And lost by one vote!) We seldom let this attitude prevent us from putting up a stiff fight when a particular interest is threatened or a possible advantage looks obtainable. But in our thinking about democracy generally and in our reactions to the pulling and hauling of its daily operation, we are apt to make judgments seriously influenced by this conception.

Second, being persuaded that the moral balance wheel in life is the healthy conscience of "good" men, we tend to be appalled by the idea that socially desirable ends can be achieved by the compromise of opposed demands. In the movies, the battle is always clean cut and the result is victory for "right." How can we believe that a stalemate in which both sides have to give and both get can be anything but craven betrayal of principle? Of course, we approve highly of "co-operation." But co-operation is something else again. Co-operation occurs when two "good" guys decide to modify their own desires or ambitions in order to get along together. They do not do this as the result of conflict and pressure. They do it because they are "right-thinking men." When men give in to other men as the result of social conflict, this is shameful compromise and no good can ever come of it!

Third, the good-guy–bad-guy approach to life leads us to look for the villain in every scene, the trick in every proposal. It makes it difficult for us to accept the good faith of political opponents. We are, therefore, easy marks for the campaign smear, the Red scare, and the *ad hominem* argument.

In one town election a committee of citizens undertook to raise the level of campaign debate. They formulated a series of questions concerning finances, schools, zoning codes, and so on, and asked the two major candidates to express themselves on these real issues. Both parties complied with relatively intelligent discussions of the queries and their impli-

cations. But three days before the election one of them broadcast a leaflet filled with the same old slurs and imputations of moral turpitude. Reading one of these, a neighbor cried with real satisfaction, "Well, they're finally getting down to brass tacks!"

Blindness to Pressure Politics

These three attitudes conspire to encourage a thoroughly unrealistic conception of the democratic process. Democracy, the average American feels, should be governed by the counsels of right-thinking men. Legislators chosen for their intelligence and good character ought to get together and make decisions about public policy on the basis of their most high-minded and objective concern for the general welfare. It is wrong, this view holds, for lawmakers or administrators to listen to the wiles or threats of "pressure groups." Lobbying —the practice of trying to inform and persuade government officials to approve or reject particular options in which the lobbyist's client is interested—is wicked and undemocratic. We ought, so goes this point of view, to let our officials alone to govern the country in terms of their dedicated understanding of the national interest.

The result of this unrealistic attitude is what any intelligent person might expect. Politicians and voters go through the motions of being concerned with nothing less than the general welfare. But *behind the scenes* the struggle for control goes on relentlessly. The only achievement of our pollyanna masquerade is to force the bargaining and compromising, the pressures and inducements, to operate underground. Instead of facing the realities of democratic politics and the ways in which a liberal society makes its decisions, we focus our eyes on a high-minded ideal which bears no relation to life.

Inevitably, then, the whole process is laid open to immeasurable deceit and chicanery. Differences in interest, which might be reasonably compromised if brought into the open,

are settled by secret deals. Unscrupulous individuals and groups can try to play both ends against the middle, and often get away with it. The whole political life of the nation is forced to operate in one way while putting up a pretense of working in another. *This is the source of much of the worst corruption in our social order.* Not the conflicts of interest and the pressures for preference, but the absurd pretense that they do not exist forces them to find secret means of operating.

Our own time has seen this psychology in operation most dramatically in the opening phase of the Eisenhower administration. During his first years in office "Ike" was obviously committed to the "counsels of right-thinking men" conception of democracy. Those who were party to his decision to enter the Presidential campaign have cited his disgust with what he regarded as the class conflicts of the New and Fair Deals as his chief motivation for seeking the Presidency. He wanted to see an end to the war of employee against employer, farmer against labor, poor against rich. He intended to be "President of *all* the people" and restore unity to the nation.

In office, President Eisenhower's first thought was to surround himself with "right-thinking" men. This meant men who would think in terms of the "whole nation," not its fragments and classes, men who would reject the doctrine of diverse interests. With this objective in mind "Ike" summoned to Washington a group of highly placed industrial, financial, and labor leaders. These men were to sit around a table and come up with answers to the vexing problems facing the nation.

President Eisenhower began very quickly to encounter some of the harder facts of political life. His Secretary of Commerce, Sinclair Weeks, got into a feud with his Secretary of Labor, Martin Durkin, over the relative rights of capital and labor. The Secretary of the Treasury went about the country promising a balanced budget, while the Secretary of

Defense demanded more equipment for preparedness. The President deprecated witch-hunts; but leading members of his own party, some within the administration itself, indulged in them loudly and often.

Over and over again "Ike" tried to dissolve real conflicts of interest within the nation by appeals to patriotism and the common good. But the disputants paused only long enough to praise the high-mindedness of the President—and went right back to fighting. Fortunately for Mr. Eisenhower, he was surrounded with advisers who were able to operate in a realistic fashion and teach him some of the elements of democratic politics.

Dwight Eisenhower managed to bring to the United States an era of "good feeling." Beneath the surface calm, however, the old pressures and struggles for preferment went on as before. Labor unions continued to upset the stability of the dollar with demands for a guaranteed annual wage. A number of high-ranking government officials turned out to be less "right-thinking" in December than they had appeared in May. Farmers showed little concern for free enterprise when it interfered with high prices. And the problem of security *with* economy refused to remain solved.

These difficulties are not the peculiar property of any party or period. Their equivalents can be found in every administration. Their appearance in the very earliest phase of the Eisenhower regime is of special significance to us here only because of "Ike's" conspicuous dedication to the counsels-of-right-thinking-men mythology.

Rejection of Political Participation

Another unfortunate result of our general misinterpretation of the nature of democracy is a widespread rejection of political participation. To become involved in politics is to become contaminated by the conflicts and compromises that it seems to demand. Men who have a great deal to offer can-

not bring themselves to engage in an activity that is so characterized by what they regard as corruption. They comfort themselves with the thought that God would not allow anything so "unchristian" to be important in ultimate terms.

In consequence, politics is left largely to professionals unless and until some scandal or crisis seems to make general intervention necessary. We let the "politicians" run our schools, care for the aged and insane, fight our battles with neighboring towns and juvenile delinquency, and make all the arrangements and compromises that the rest of us are too pure to endure. When they prove inept or abuse our trust, this simply confirms our earlier opinion of the game and the players, and we draw further back into the shadow of the grandstand.

The whole national mood was voiced plaintively years ago by a Midwestern clergyman who said, "The only way to clean the crooks out of politics is to get more honest men into it. But you really can't expect honest men to get involved in such a dirty business!"

It might do a great deal to improve the quality of our political life and leadership if we were more careful to distinguish between actual corruption and the conflict and compromise that are of the essence of democratic procedures.

Effort to Neutralize Critical Issues

In a small eastern seaboard city a crisis has arisen in the educational system. School buildings, teachers' salaries, and academic ratings have fallen far below the standards required for effective instruction. The Board of Education has done nothing to correct these growing deficiencies. Its members have been in their jobs for years and not one of them has a child of school age. They are far more interested in controlling the tax rate than in educating young people.

Naturally the local P.T.A.'s and various community organizations are greatly incensed about this situation. They

have petitioned the superintendent of schools, memorialized the state legislature, made protest appearances before the Board of Education, and have threatened to picket the members' homes! All with no result.

Why, they were asked, have you not made this whole business a campaign issue? Go to your party leaders and threaten to throw the whole slate out of office if some action is not forthcoming on the schools!

This suggestion was greeted with shocked protests. That would be putting the schools into *politics!* Impossible!

This same attitude exists in many states with regard to other institutions and similarly deplorable conditions. In one southern state indignant civic groups have been trying for years to force some reform in the state prison system. They have been met with cold indifference by the prison commissioner. The penitentiaries are to him nothing more than a source of graft. But when in desperation the leaders of the protest movement decided to make an election issue of the matter, over half of their members resigned, including three of the five clergymen involved. The group had gotten the affair into politics and that was "the wrong approach."

In many communities this same story could be repeated with reference to mental hospitals, reform schools, homes for the aged, or medical care for the needy. The desperate determination to keep these things out of politics has put them beyond the control of the democratic process.

It is obvious, of course, that there is a kind of "politics" that has earned its bad name and that ought to be kept out of education, and everything else in the community for that matter. But there is that kind of religion, medicine, and business as well. The frauds and charlatans that infest these latter fields do not turn us from them in disgust. It is not the measure of its real corruption that has turned so many Americans against politics. It is, rather, the fact that it involves an acceptance of the reality of society, involvement in

conflict, and endless compromise that outrages our moralistic individualism.

POSTSCRIPT

This chapter would be incomplete and unfair to our American political system if it failed to mention some of the positive and creative results of our individualistic approach to politics. There are many such, and the more important of them deserve at least a passing reference.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution that our individualism makes to politics in the United States is the tendency that it has to minimize the accumulation of doctrine and ideology along partisan lines. Obviously a political party that is primarily concerned with the selection of popular candidates cannot be too rigid in its imposition of any dogma. Emphasis on men rather than policies has its bad side. But it does seem to have freed our major parties from the gradual accretion of dogma that has paralyzed and destroyed so many European political aggregations.

There is no doubt, also, that personality politics has permitted a more rapid infusion of new blood into the political body than can be achieved under nonpersonality orientations. In Europe, for example, men are still regarded as "coming youngsters" when they have reached their middle fifties. This is true because of the hierarchical make-up of continental party structures. There is no way for a young man to skip the many steps up the ladder by an abrupt and dramatic appeal to the general public. The public does not often respond to this kind of lone-wolf approach.

In the United States, however, it is not at all unheard of for a newcomer to win great power and high office for himself within a few years of his political initiation. All he needs is an issue with which to make headlines and capture the public imagination. Richard Nixon, Joseph McCarthy, and Governor Muskie of Maine are all examples of this sort of thing.

This can be an unfortunate kind of success in many ways, but it undeniably allows for a quick and frequent change of political leadership.

A third contribution of our individualism to the positive side of political life can be seen in the chronic American distrust of political solutions to all problems. Because he thinks of politics as essentially corrupt, the average man is reluctant to turn over to government the handling of his responsibilities and rights. He constantly struggles to keep government to a minimum and hold the reins of power in individual hands. This can lead to a whole host of serious complications if carried to an extreme in our complex social order. But to a certain extent it has protected the American community against too rapid a proliferation of arbitrary authority.

It is obvious that in this realm, as in most others, there are two sides to all coins. What appears to be an evil or a disadvantage when viewed from one angle looks more like a safeguard or virtue when examined from another. This fact of life has led many into a kind of complacency. They assume that every change for the better is also a change for the worse, and can summon no enthusiasm for any reforms.

This, however, is a corrosive and self-defeating kind of cynicism. Granted that we shall never even begin to approach perfection in the development of our political institutions, still the desire to improve where possible, to secure what has proved valuable, and to refine what has been shown to be mixed good and evil—this ambition is invariably found where the political process promotes the freedom, dignity, and well-being of men.

Chapter 4

Christian Insight and Democratic Process

The preceding three chapters have been largely descriptive of the popular American attitude toward religion in politics, the social mythology out of which this attitude has grown, and the practical political consequences that it has produced.

In the course of that discussion we touched at several points upon the part played by the "popular" interpretation of Christian theology in building and undergirding the foundations of the individualistic folklore. In this present chapter we shall take a look first at the weaknesses of this popular theology as Christian doctrine and then at some of the insights of contemporary Christian thought into American democratic politics.

CORRECTING SOME MISINTERPRETATIONS

The spiritual rationalization of the mythology of rugged individualism is based largely upon the assumption that Reformation theology constitutes a declaration of independence from the religious community. The teachings of early Protestant leaders are interpreted as proclaiming the uncon-

ditioned personal relationship of the individual with God. Attacks upon the Roman Catholic hierarchy are read as the rejection of all authority. The priesthood of believers is translated into the expendability of the church. The condemnation of certain formalistic modes of worship is made the pretext for denying the sacramental in human relationships. And insistence upon the right to study the Bible is perverted into the notion that one man's theology is as good as every other's, regardless of intelligence or training. The result of all these assertions is to create in the individual a dreadful sense of complete spiritual independence and isolation. This is easily translated into the social outlook that we have discussed, with the political results that have been observed.

Human Dependence

The first word that the Christian faith says to this rendition of Reformation thought is one of clarification and defense. The great reformers did not deny the involvement of man in his communities, either temporal or spiritual. Their war against the particular structures of a specific religious institution was not meant to be a rejection of man's spiritual interdependence. Nor was their determination to make the Bible freely available based on a belief in the individual's omniscient intuition in matters of basic Christian doctrine. They were far too realistic about the nature of man and society to fall into such errors. Any effort to justify an extreme individualism in terms of their thought is predestined to failure or much quoting out of context.

Luther, for example, insisted upon the centrality of the church and had harsh things to say about those who set themselves up as lay popes. Calvin's firm convictions about the significance of the community are written in blood across the pages of history. The great contemporary churches that trace their lineage most directly to the famous spokesmen of the Reformation reveal in their theologies and polity no de-

fense of the idea that man, unaided and isolated, can reach spiritual maturity.

Protestant theology assumes a biblical conception of human nature and destiny. Indeed, it was a return to this biblical view that it offered, to replace much of what it had rejected in Roman Catholicism. In putting all of its emphasis on freedom, the individualistic mythology overlooks the fact that the freedom of which the Protestant boasts is freedom to interpret a particular body of material in a framework of life and thought that took man's dependence on God and other men for granted. If the great reformers do not make explicit the fact of interdependence as often as they explicate that of freedom, it is because it did not seem to them that the former was open to any serious question.

What is this biblical view of man's relationship to God and other men which seems, then, to be the proper basis for Protestant social analysis?

Without resorting to a parade of proof-texts, one significant generalization can be made. Throughout the Bible man's relationship to God is *inextricably bound up* with his relationship to other men. All humanity sprang from one seed. All men fell in a single act. All are offered redemption in the death of Christ.

This relationship of inextricable involvement is made even more clear in the detailed record of God's dealing with Israel. When the king offends the Lord, the nation trembles under judgment. The fathers eat the sour grapes of sin and the children's teeth are set on edge to the third and fourth generation. God makes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Ten righteous men in its midst could have saved Sodom from destruction.

In the New Testament the same theme is repeated. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the *world* through him might be saved." Jesus wept over a Jerusalem that he would have gathered to him as a

hen gathers her young. He rebukes those who call him good, saying that God alone is good.

Perhaps the most dramatic statement of this theme is to be found in the story of the Great Judgment as it is told by Matthew. Most of us are thoroughly familiar with one aspect of this account. We recall that there is to be a dividing into sheep and goats, saved and lost, on the basis of kindness to the naked, hungry, and imprisoned. But we often overlook the fact that this judgment is described as a judging of the "nations." It is the *nation* that did show love that is invited into joy.

This story is certainly not meant to be an endorsement of the welfare state. But Jesus was articulating dramatically here what every sensitive Jew understood—that men are bound together in communities and cannot be isolated and judged apart from these relationships. This is an obvious fact of life. One wonders how it can ever be overlooked. From birth to death all of us are borne on the backs and hearts of others. Our food, clothing, shelter, education, health, everything down to a decent burial depends on the presence and responsible creativity of other human beings. It is not only the slum child who is the product of his environment. Every man is dramatically involved in and shaped by the common life of humanity.

Does this mean that the fate of every soul is determined by the fate of the communities to which it belongs? Two things must be said in answer to that question:

First, to a greater degree than we have cared to believe, the spiritual condition of the individual is strengthened or weakened by the spiritual condition of those around him. Our interdependence, like our freedom, runs to ultimates, not merely inconsequentials. We are for one another not merely the sources of physical and psychological security but the very channels of grace itself! So significant are human relationships in the over-all scheme of creation that their cor-

ruption is capable of working total destruction. This is the source of the classical Christian conviction that one must seek to save the souls of others *even at the risk of his own.* Such a statement would be meaningless if there were not a terrible and final impact in human contacts.

The second thing to be said is that the salvation of individuals is undoubtedly possible amid even the most complete social depravity. It is possible, however, not to the degree to which the individual has managed to extricate himself *from* that situation, but to the extent to which he has sought to relate himself responsibly and redemptively *to* it. The man who hurls himself into the very center of a self-destroying community in an effort to retard and reverse the processes of disintegration is undoubtedly closer to salvation, despite all of the hell around him, than the hermit sitting in the isolation of his lonely cell. If this is not true, then the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is indeed the scandal that it has been called by the world.

The Christian faith as understood by the Protestant theologian does not furnish a spiritual rationalization for rugged individualism. It teaches us, rather, that men were created together and are judged in their relationships, that every man is a priest, not for himself alone but for all other men, that every human association can be the means of grace. Its prophets have proclaimed the will of God to be not the redemption of the pure from the company of the wicked but the restoration to health of the whole creation. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Human Sinfulness

Just as the excesses of rugged individualism spring from a misunderstanding of human dependence, so the errors of the moralistic analysis of history grow out of an inadequate conception of human sinfulness.

Men are all subject to temptation, goes the popular theological line. They want to do wicked things such as lie, steal, fornicate, and kill. But some men are able to control themselves by will power. These are the "good" men. They must find some means of bringing under restraint the vicious impulses of the "bad" men, who do not have self-control. The desire of man to do bad things is what we call human "sinfulness." It is this that makes governments necessary.

Obviously there is an element of truth in this statement of Christian doctrine. But it is only a partial truth. Human sinfulness does lead men to do things that we think of as "wicked," but it goes far beyond this. It blinds men to the facts of life, particularly their own motives and limitations. When the traditional theologian speaks of "total depravity" he is not expressing merely a shocked reaction to the quality or quantity of human sins. He is describing the completeness of our corruption, the root and branch involvement in sin. He is saying that men lack even the ground on which to stand in examining their alienation from God. He is pointing out not only that men do what they should not, and do it over and over again, but that they are unable to comprehend the frightfulness of what they are doing. They call evil good and good evil, and mistake their own desires for cosmic absolutes.

It is not important here to pass judgment on the concept of total depravity. It states in forceful terms the principle involved in the whole doctrine of original sin, the universality of human sinfulness. Sin, the Christian believes, is not merely to be found in man's *desire* to do evil. It lies also in the infirmity of his judgment, his inability to make *pure* decisions even when minded to do so. In the biblical story of the fall of man, for example, Eve did not say, "To hell with God's commandment!"—and grab the forbidden apple. She told herself quite earnestly that the fruit was to be desired "to make one wise." Here is the essence of man's sinfulness,

then. Not immoderate desires or uncontrollable passions; but the will to use his most sacred values and highest faculties as the tools of his selfishness—without even being conscious in particular cases that this is what he is doing!

Throughout history this has been the story. Men rationalize their disobedience in terms of the very will of God that they are disobeying. The Spanish Inquisition tortured hundreds of men and women for the glory of God. Cromwell starved and slaughtered the Irish for the same good reason. And when John Jones strikes his child in weary irritation, he tells himself that he is doing it for the "kid's own good."

Understanding this fact of human nature, indeed insisting upon it, the Christian faith does not succumb to the temptation to suppose that the sole source of "good" in either personal or social terms is the rational decision of the individual to do the "right" thing. Every great confession of our faith is testimony to its conviction that man can do little good on his own, that he is dependent upon the grace of God and everlastingly in need of redemption.

Thus, the Christian who understands his faith cannot seriously believe that the dynamic of history is the struggle between good men and bad men. He knows how corrupt is human judgment and how weak human will. If he is a sensitive person he realizes from his own experiences that very little of any man's life allows even the pretense of moral definition.

Here, then, is the understanding in terms of which the Christian analyzes and evaluates social and political processes: Man exists amid a complex of relationships upon which he depends for the physical and psychological necessities of life, by which he is dramatically conditioned, and through which the creative, judging, and redeeming activity of God operates upon him. Because he is a limited and dependent creature whose experiences are only a part of the vast wholeness of life, man is always making relative judgments about his

rights and duties within his complex relationships. But because of his sinfulness, he is forever tempted to press these relative judgments as absolutes.

It becomes clear when this basis of interpretation is made explicit that the Christian cannot deny the significance of the social process. Nor can he define institutions as the incidental configurations sketched by the autonomous movements of individuals. If no man can stand alone in any ultimate sense, then relationships are not merely adjunct to personality. They are integral to it. If every man's perception of "the good" is corrupt, then no man can be said to be "right thinking" in the sense that he is able to transcend self-interest and respond fully to objective righteousness. God's will does not speak through the words or deeds of any one man or group. It is made manifest in the creative relationships which modify and chastise, balance and correct, the presumption and error of the individual.

Once we realize how significant all human relationships are for the persons involved and for society also, it becomes clear that both the individual concerned and the social order have a stake in the way in which these relationships are governed. The rugged individualist may say to the dissatisfied worker, for example, that if he does not like the conditions of his job, he should pack up and move to another one, that his association with employer and fellow workers is purely voluntary. But the Christian understands that the whole thing is not so simple. Men cannot easily tear themselves loose from the communities and ties that make up their lives. They cannot really solve their problems by hunting around for the perfect context. They are compelled to modify their own desires to some extent. They also have the right to seek to modify their environment, to try to bring it into closer harmony with their own personalities and expectations.

This is perhaps the most critical difference between traditional Protestant individualism and the more realistic view

that has been suggested here. The individualist sees men as independent and autonomous units that come together at will and separate as easily. Thus, his conception of politics is that it should make the arrangements in terms of which these occasional and transitory contacts are handled. The realistic Christian view assigns a much more significant and complicated job to political action.

THE POLITICS OF REALISM

It is always dangerous to attempt to apply the insights of the Christian faith in too much detail to the institutions and processes of a particular social order. The very corruption of judgment that we have been discussing is apt to lead one into serious distortions and special pleading. If we are to discern even dimly the claims of God upon our own lives, however, we must be willing to run that risk to the extent of some generalizations, fully realizing how inadequate they will inevitably be.

Planning and Power

Wherever men come together into groups to work toward some common objective, they must plan. A certain responsibility is assigned to various persons and subdivisions of the larger body. Co-ordination of these various tasks becomes necessary. And someone must be given the right to mediate differences of opinion on method or emphasis. Thus, power comes into being. This power may be vested in a democratically organized council of some sort. Or it may be delegated to one individual. It cannot be avoided or ignored. Group action requires planning; planning involves decision making; decision making generates power.

Men often make the mistake of assuming that power can be dissolved by ignoring it, that if you just pretend it is not there, it will go away. This is wholly false. Power that is

ignored will find its way into the hands of those most able and willing to use it. The men who think they serve democracy by denying the existence of power-creating activities do grave disservice to the very cause they think to advance. Let us look at a historic illustration of the way in which this principle operates.

Toward the end of the last century American industrial progress had developed great aggregations of competing business enterprises. When the first violent period of expansion slowed down, the owners and managers of these industries began to undertake various types of integration of their holdings. Among other means they organized what came to be called "trusts." They were undoubtedly motivated in part by the desire to control production and prices, to eliminate the kind of competition in which only the consumer benefits. But they were also responding to the problems that beset any disintegrated large-scale operation. They wanted to eliminate duplication, uneconomic use of labor and resources, and blood-letting stock manipulations.

The net effect of these organizations was to create a planning operation. Decisions had to be made about closing plants, discontinuing operations, consolidating administration, settling prices, and so on. Thus, combinations of businessmen generated power over the American economy—power which they used to both good and bad effect.

At this point the men and women who suffered from the decisions being made by this planning—and strengthened by the power to act that the planning had generated—began to complain. Why, they demanded, should all of this economic authority be vested in private hands? Why should a few men decide on steel prices and railroad fares? And as a result of this agitation, the federal government stepped in with regulatory legislation.

Now the important thing to note here is that the government did not *create* power. It was created by the planning

operations of individuals and groups. The government merely stepped in and took over the power when there was reason to believe that it was going to be or had been misused in private hands. If the government had kept hands off the situation, this would not have dissolved the power created by business trusts. It would have allowed it to remain in the possession of a minority concerned with the profit to be made from it.

This same process can be seen operating in many areas of life. The right of an employer to hire and fire his workers gives him power over their lives. When they form a union and set limits to his right to hire and fire, they have caused a division of the existing quantity of power. When the state or federal government steps in with laws regulating unions, this basic power is divided again, and so on. If the government were to withdraw from the field of business or labor regulation, it would not destroy power by so doing. It would simply return it to the original two-way split, capital and labor each becoming a bit stronger as a result.

The tendency of some Americans to regard power as something manufactured by government or conspired into existence by ambitious men is substantially in error. The acts of government *can* and often do generate power sources just as do the acts of other social groups. The temptation inherent in both men and institutions to accumulate and misuse available power makes its easy to relate cause with effect. But the real creator of most power in the modern world is the complexity that demands planning and co-ordination.

Love and Justice

The response of our traditional individualism to the problem of power has been to suggest that it be moderated and controlled by love. In international affairs this has come to be known as the "white man's burden" philosophy. Western imperialism has long justified its autocratic control of

colonial areas in Asia, for example, by alleging that it was using its control of these backward people for the civilization and uplift of the latter. They do not need political rights, this school of thought holds. We will do what is best for them because of our Christian responsibility. They do not need justice. They have love.

This same reasoning is applied at every level of life. Employers often refused to deal with unions in their plants because they felt a "paternal" responsibility for their workers and held that a union was an effort to substitute justice for love. Teachers and parents often justify the use of authoritarian methods in the same way. Because we love our children, they say, we shall do what is best for them. They need have no fears.

This point of view can be seen in its most tragic form in the treatment of the American Negro. For decades Negroes have been denied equality before the law in many states of this nation. They have been kept from juries, refused the vote, and told just where they can live and work. All of this is done, so we are told by whites, for their own good. Negroes are incapable of standing among us as full citizens. And the apostle of segregation goes on to point to all of the privileges that their special status gives his colored neighbors. They are rarely pressed for taxes. Their children are often eligible for academic scholarships not open to white students. When they get in minor trouble with the law, it is often passed off with a less serious penalty than would be meted out to a white man charged with the same offense. This is love, we are told. These people are loved. Why should they want justice?

There is a plausible sound to such arguments if one is willing to ignore the facts of human nature. But the realistic Christian cannot do so. He knows that man's judgment is too subject to the corruption of pride and selfishness to permit him to lay claim to this kind of discretion where his fellows'

lives are concerned. Man's most terrible sinfulness is always disguised as high-minded objectivity or responsible love. Hitler went into Poland to give the Poles better culture than they were supposedly capable of rearing for themselves. And he wept over the ruins of Warsaw, crying, "Why did they make me do this?" Mussolini invaded Ethiopia proclaiming himself the redeemer of that land from savage paganism. And the hired squads that break up efforts to organize southern textile workers are often described by conservative clergymen as defenders of "the right to work."

Love, the Christian understands, is not something *less* than justice. It is something *more*. It is what we are offered by God. But even God was not willing to cancel the demands of justice. The Cross stands in constant rebuke to those who are minded to forget this.

Conflict and Reconciliation

Aware that man's sinfulness corrupts even his love, the Christian is not willing to trust the fate of the community to the counsels of right-thinking men. He realizes that such men, even when sincere, are incapable of differentiating between their own values and the demands of justice.

Thus, the Christian is willing to admit that the political process is inevitably made up of the pulling, hauling, bargaining, and compromising of diverse interests within the community. He is able to see that the American social order embodies many serious and radically diverse interests. He has no inclination to conceal them behind a facade of apparent unity. They are, from his point of view, not evidences of decadence but the natural outgrowths of man's finiteness. And they are best dealt with by setting up organized and controlled methods of reaching agreement.

The Christian's faith in democracy, then, does not spring from its lack of tensions and class struggles, but from its establishment of fair and effective means of handling them.

He is not shocked by the operation of pressure groups and lobbyists, because he has no illusions about what government would be like without them. He knows they are simply open and obvious forms of the struggle for preferment that goes on in society everywhere and at all times. He would like to see all men live together as brothers. He is too realistic, however, to build a political philosophy on the assumption that they are likely to do so tomorrow or the next day!

What he understands about government applies also to the operation of political parties. They are the sub-bargaining units within which are made the accommodations and compromises necessary for the establishment of a working consensus. He realizes that the factional disputes that so offend his idealistic brothers are the means by which human beings work through their differences on policy and personnel.

This is why the realistic Christian may tend to be somewhat suspicious of the suggestion so frequently made today that the major American political parties ought to reorganize and divide along lines of liberal and conservative philosophies. This point of view tends to overlook 50 per cent of the function of a party in the two-party system: the responsibility for reconciling men to the compromises and sacrifices that have to be made in all real life situations.

Under our present partisan divisions there are people of a relatively liberal and conservative stripe in both camps. Thus, every time the party promulgates a program or a candidate takes a stand on an issue, it is necessary to explain and defend it to that part of the organization's following that is inclined to oppose it as too liberal or conservative. This must be done in order to prevent a split that might do the organization serious damage. When, for instance, some of the liberal United States Senators voted in favor of an immigration bill which barred all Communists from entry into the United States, they had to explain to their constituents

just why they had departed from their usual position on such questions. And when they later voted to alter or repeal the act, they had a similar job to do with another element in their following.

This is the kind of process that greatly distresses many earnest Christians. They find it dismaying to see political leaders forced to moderate their stands and constantly apologize for their acts to people who apparently should not even be in their party. This, they contend, is a process that threatens political integrity.

Those who have studied the operation of parties in other countries, however, almost invariably point out that our two-party system has kept this nation from splitting up into innumerable splinter groups based on diversity in point of view. There seems to be good reason to think that this is true. It would not be, however, if the two-party system simply compelled people to stay within a party by force or tradition. The advantages achieved by our American political alignment are not merely the fortunate results of electoral inertia. They stem from the fact that the rationalizing that must be done *within each party* serves the highly important function of reconciling diverse elements *within the nation* as a whole. In a sense, every man who is elected to office in this country represents the people of his constituency to the nation *and* the nation to the people of his constituency.

The result is a kind of continuity in policy and a constant healing over of factional divisions. To people who regard man as an ideological creature capable of arriving at purely rational decisions, this whole system inevitably seems awkward and frustrating. But to the Christian realist who sees men as always overreaching themselves, always making claims from which they must later retreat, this blurring of partisan divisions is the invaluable mechanism of social reconciliation.

Men and Institutions

It will be quite clear from what has been said in the preceding pages that the perceptive Christian does not evaluate political morality in terms either of ends or means exclusively. He is not like the Communist who holds any means justified which gives promise of achieving a desired objective. Nor can he fall into the moralist's error of subordinating the actual results of a course of conduct to the degree of earnestness with which it is pursued. He understands the two-way flow of influence between ends and means, one modifying the other and in turn being modified by it.

The same thing is true in more particular terms of the relationship of men to institutions. Human motives and individual character do a great deal to shape the patterns into which political structures fall in every age and culture. The Christian cannot accept the contention that social processes have a life of their own which man is helpless to influence. But he realizes fully that those relatively stabilized centers of activity which we call institutions do have *existence*. They are not merely nouns used to designate an aggregation of quite autonomous individuals. One man plus one man can, under the proper circumstances, become something wholly distinct from either of the two components. And this new entity then generates the power to influence seriously the very personalities and all other relationships of the men who make it up.

This being true, the Christian appreciates the crucial nature of institutional forms. He is not so naïve as to suppose that men can be what they *will* to be regardless of the nature of the demands made upon them and the frameworks within which they must be. He understands that it is wholly irresponsible to suppose, for example, that the American Negro can be expected to grow into responsible citizenship while

he is deprived of the basic rights of that status. He also understands that it is absurd to suppose that given full equality this depressed minority will *immediately* begin to use it responsibly. He has no faith, in short, in institutional changes as the be-all and end-all of social justice. But he knows that they play a critically important part in the total job of achieving it.

Thus, the Christian is able to recognize the many virtues of the democratic process, particularly as it operates in the United States. Without necessarily realizing, in theological terms at least, just what they were doing, the men who established our Constitutional forms, and those later ones who have guided fundamental changes in them, have built a remarkable structure of flexibility within stability within flexibility. They have enabled men to change their institutions in the light of what these very institutions have taught them, to tear down what is wrong while still standing on a firm foundation of all that is right.

Our Constitutional forms give us the opportunity to change any aspect of our political life. However, they compel us to do so in such a way and at such a rate as to ensure reasonable social stability at all times. They are based upon the assumption that men are not merely divided against one another, but are also seriously divided against themselves. They allow us to do what we have a sustained will to do, but restrain us from those frequent impulses for which we should hate ourselves the next decade.

It was said earlier that it is dangerous and wrong to claim for any political or social structure that it is *the* Christian pattern. But it seems safe and fair to say of Constitutional democracy that it represents a very reasonable and imaginative political response to the Christian view of man and his relationships.

A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY?

One cannot discuss Christian political responsibility for long without running into the query: What is our objective? It is quite clear that the question refers not to particular projects but to the possibility of bringing about something that could be called "a Christian Society."

At one time this concept of a Christian social order was a rather simple one. It was a community in which all men were committed to Christ and lived in fellowship following their Lord's example. From the very beginnings of the Christian era, groups of men and women have tried to set up communities that were ordered by explicitly applied rules of love and self-sacrifice. Sometimes these communities were intended to withdraw from the world and provide a better life only for their members. This was the case with many monastic orders. Other groups quite consciously set about trying to create patterns of life that would leaven and change the whole society into a new Jerusalem.

Paralleling the communities of love, however, there have also been more direct and dramatic efforts to bring about a Christian world. Throughout its long history the Roman Catholic Church has quite candidly sought to bring its influence to bear upon rulers and politicians to shape national policy according to the Roman Catholic conception of a Christian social order. Diverse papal pronouncements have sketched the outlines of such an order in fairly specific terms.

Protestantism has also been active in this realm. Cromwell in England and Calvin in Geneva were committed to the Christianizing of their provinces in relatively abrupt and often violent ways. And a number of the first colonies in this new world were more or less theocratic in their political make-up.

The contemporary Protestant examining past efforts in this direction is likely to feel that they tended to fall at one of two extremes. They either assumed that men would, without compulsion or institutional procedures, live in "unity and Godly love," *or* they were based upon the assumption that God's will could be determined by the rulers of the society and enforced upon men as law. The voluntary fellowships failed in most instances because men were not able to rise above themselves steadily enough to make good will alone the governing principle of a vital community. And the Christian Commonwealths deteriorated because they sought to limit the will of God to operation through legalistic patterns.

If we grant that we are still the same mankind that has repeatedly failed in its efforts to design and construct *a Christian society,* we shall cherish no illusions about our ability to accomplish what our predecessors failed to achieve. Indeed, much of what we have been saying in preceding pages was learned by Christians from these very experiences. Our generation in the faith is more actively aware of man's inability to transcend himself fully in love because it has been witness to the inadequacy of even great spirits set to this task in the past. It is unwilling to trust all to the hands of institutional authority because of the very frailty of this alternative historically.

The contemporary analyst is inclined to regard the Christian quality of any social order as being a matter of degree or direction. He cannot accept the notion that a particular pattern of society has ever been or will ever be "*the* Christian community"; for he understands too well the limitations of human wisdom and human selflessness. No political forms will ever be able to take account of all man's needs and potentialities. Nor will any society be constructed that can merit the designation "Christian" without a purer love than men will ever be able to supply.

It is possible, however, to suggest in general terms some

of the qualities that make for a "*more* Christian" social structure, some of the principles by which one can measure the health or infirmity of a nation from a Christian perspective.

First, the more-or-less Christian quality of a society will be judged by the extent to which all the people share in the making of the decisions by which their lives are ordered. Men have not only a right to guide their own destinies, but a positive responsibility to accept the burden of doing so. Where this is denied them, they cannot fully achieve the stature of children of God.

In our Western democratic tradition, full participation in decision making has taken the form of democratic elections with general enfranchisement. As Americans we are naturally prejudiced in favor of this principle, and we find it difficult to discover in history or imagine in theory any way in which it can be obtained by other means. It is entirely possible, however, that in a disintegrated social order built around the family and clan, a different pattern of individual participation might be evolved. Or in some future time a community might actually work out the kind of anarchistic syndicalism or industrial government through labor unions which would meet the test proposed. The Roman Catholic Church, for one, has never been persuaded that democracy as Americans practice it is the only means of assuring full expression to those concerned in policy choices.

We shall have to bear in mind, of course, that general participation in decision making means more than can be provided through mere political channels. The conditions under which men work, the use made of the natural resources of their country, and the distribution of wealth and earnings by the prevailing economic system touch men at very sensitive points. Thus, a more Christian society will be one in which an ever increasing number of people are able, legally and intellectually, to take part in economic decisions. This can be done through widely dispersed stock ownership

or employee-management councils under a free enterprise system. Or it might be accomplished through the channels of a socialist regime. One may have a strong opinion about which of several possibilities is most likely to succeed. But this must not be allowed to foreclose consideration of the others. Nor should it mislead us into branding any such device as unchristian.

The second criterion by which the health of a community can be judged in Christian terms is the degree of freedom that it allows within the bounds of basic order. This is the source of a good deal of confusion. There is a tendency in our time to believe that nations can and must render themselves completely immune to any danger, internal or international. In the name of security, diverse freedoms have been seriously infringed in this country and abroad.

The Christian understands, however, that total security is impossible for men, that the condition of life is one of perpetual uncertainty. He realizes that any community which sets out to protect itself against every contingency will end up in the grip of social *rigor mortis*; for all movement, individual and social, involves some risk.

Here again the truth applies in both the political and economic fields. The realistic Christian appreciates the part that economic freedom has played not only in building the material well-being of men, but more importantly, in serving as a check upon the expanding power of the state in modern society. Idealists are often inclined to assume that it is possible to have free political institutions within a framework of a controlled economic structure. It may be possible but it would be a very difficult thing to preserve. Human freedom is not an abstraction. It cannot be defended by mere documentary pledges. Its safeguard is to be found in the institutions and patterns of life which give men a measure of control over the inevitable pretensions of the state. Private ownership of property, the right to strike, free enterprise, and com-

petitive business are such patterns. Labor unions and corporations are alike means of counterbalancing the weight of Leviathan.

The third standard of the more-or-less Christian character of any society is its provision to all men of the elemental necessities of life. It is impossible to justify hunger and nakedness in a world which has mastered production to the extent that ours has. While it is unrealistic to suppose that men will exert themselves fully without the incentive of wage and salary differentials, this does not rationalize the use of hunger and homelessness or the threat of these things. If there are men and women who would prefer subsistence living to work, these will simply have to be borne by the rest of us as are the sick and imprisoned.

Obviously the more this requirement can be met by voluntary associations and the availability of creative employment, the better. But the Christian cannot assent to the notion that the right of men to earn their livelihood must depend entirely upon the concatenation of chance forces or profit motives. He knows that what some regard as inexorable economic laws are made up in large part of human desires, fears, and calculations. These are not absolutes. They must not be made the test of any child's right to his bread, or any man's opportunity to do a decent day's work for a fair wage. Just as men have the right to plan together through business enterprises for their mutual enrichment, through labor unions for their common advantage, they have a right to act through their government to assure themselves and their children the basic necessities of life.

Fourth, something of the Christian quality of a nation can be seen in the use that it makes of its natural resources. Where mineral deposits are squandered, land allowed to erode without control, and children permitted to grow to maturity poorly educated and uncared-for in body, men have forgotten that the earth is the Lord's. Everything that it yields

to their comfort and pleasure is from Him. The Christian sees in every human life and every acre of land priceless treasures that are his to use but never waste.

Finally, a major measurement of the Christian stature of a social order is its dramatization of human interdependence and the incentives that it offers inclusive efforts toward constructive ends.

Men cannot be molded by political action alone. Nor can they be made to live as brothers simply by exhortation and example. The achievement of a real fellowship among the members of any community depends in part on the extent to which the individuals and groups that make it up are helped to see their dependence on one another and constrained by both profit and penalty to forms of mutually helpful activity. It lies within the power of the state, for example, to encourage men to ignore racial and ethnic differences by a variety of sanctions. During World War II it was found that the letting of government contracts only to firms that employed all competent workers regardless of color brought about an amazing deterioration in racial antagonisms. And antidiscrimination laws enacted by several of the states have helped to overcome long-standing patterns of bias in education and housing.

The Christian understands that what such laws do is to create conditions under which prejudice has to fight hard to stay alive. They do not make men love one another. But they make it possible and profitable for them to enter into those relationships in which respect becomes easier. It is as unrealistic to suppose that prejudice is natural as it is to regard brotherhood as inevitable. The more Christian society is one in which conditions are deliberately created in which there is a maximum opportunity for full appreciation by one man of another.

But this principle does not apply only to the elimination of bias in ethnic diversity. It relates also to the attitude of

the whole community toward those outside it. A measure of the more-or-less Christian health of a city, state, or nation is its sense of responsibility for all other such entities and the people who make them up. The political agency that stimulates exclusiveness and antagonism is, from the Christian point of view, in a state of decay. The one that works to encourage inclusiveness and understanding is moving toward vigorous maturity. Those forces in the United States which tend to foster a patient and generous policy toward the rest of the world are to that extent more Christian. Those which tend toward nationalistic isolation are less so.

The five general principles stated above are in no sense meant to be exhaustive. They are intended to suggest the method of measuring Christian vitality in social orders rather than to detail its content. If at points they seem to jostle one another in a kind of contradiction, this simply reflects the fact that life does not lend itself to neat categories and clear distinctions. A religion which commits itself to working within such boundaries is *ipso facto* rendering itself to that extent irrelevant to the world of real people.

Christian political thought and the action growing out of it have tended to suffer in the recent past from an excess of formalism. In the drawing up of Christian Commonwealths enforcing love by law and in the moralistic perfectionism of the individualist who cared more for purity of means than achievement of ends, we have seen the fallacy of trying to apply theological constructs in any exact way to human affairs. The effort to do so summons the former into contempt and the latter into confusion. The pacifist who rejects all violence is as guilty of blind legalism as the Catholic scholar drawing up detailed criteria for a "just war." Both have forgotten that God made the world for man, not man for the world. Thus the pattern of what *can be* is to be cut in the image of human possibility, not abstract absolutes.

The Christian faith, therefore, cannot give us a detailed plan for political action. But neither is it confined to moralistic generalizations relating only to motive. It helps man to understand his political role by giving him a picture of himself as both the creator and creature of that role.

Chapter 5

The Structure of Political Parties

It should be abundantly clear from what has been said in preceding chapters that effective Christian political action involves an understanding of the *mechanisms* of politics. Just as the loftiest principle is helpless to translate itself into program, so is the finest platform incapable of self-enactment. The man or woman who enters the political area armed with nothing but good intentions courts defeat for himself and offers a prestige-building victory to the very forces that he seeks to destroy. If we really accept the significance of *what* is done in politics, we shall be compelled to measure our own sincerity, in part at least, by the extent to which we master the details of political procedure. This means first of all a thorough understanding of the basis of all political organization—the political party.

This responsibility cannot be fully discharged by a survey course in political science. It is one thing to sit in a college lecture room and study the forms and processes of American political life. It is quite another to stand in the middle of a bustling city, a sleepy village, or sparsely populated farm area and relate theory to fact. How does one fit that neat

chart of local, state, and county committees onto a landscape broken by dusty roads or a jumble of wretched tenements? How can one orient himself to a particular situation when no one seems to know or be willing to discuss the basic functioning of the political process in a particular community?

This is the kind of problem that confronts everyone who seeks to understand the politics of his neighborhood. To some extent it arises from the deliberate policies of political leadership. The men who are most influential in guiding the activities of the major parties are frequently very reluctant to give publicity to the machinery by which they operate. They have learned from experience that confusion about the political process tends to reduce public interest in what happens therein; and reduced interest makes it much easier to keep control in the hands of professional politicians.

I have known personally a number of communities in which it was almost impossible for a newcomer to learn even the most elementary facts about the political process. Except for elections periodically, the machinery of politics was quite invisible. Questions to older residents brought only pained confessions that they had "never really understood" just how the democratic system operated in their area. In several instances, inquiries made of town officials were rebuffed with the coldly courteous suggestion that "these matters should be left to party leaders."

More often than not the apparent invisibility of the political structure below the level of state and national elections arises from the part-time character of so much of our political activity and leadership. Until fairly recently, for example, the two major parties did not even maintain national headquarters between Presidential elections. Offices were opened in the months leading up to the nominating conventions and closed shortly after the inauguration ceremonies. Except for frantic efforts to collect money with which to settle campaign bills, there was almost no nationally spon-

sored party work outside of this brief period. This meant that national policy was formulated in hit-and-miss fashion out of the speeches of so-called titular leaders and the legislative activities of Congressional caucuses.

Today this situation has changed to some extent. Both parties now have skeleton staffs at work at the national level in the intervals between jousts for the White House. However, no observer of these staffs in action goes away with the feeling that they are doing much more than hold the fort or keep the chairs warm. And the hostility of the party regulars toward these national office bureaucrats is the source of much embarrassment and dissension.

At the state and local levels there is, naturally, even less effort to dramatize and integrate the working of the party between election campaigns. This is partly a result of the deliberate secretiveness already mentioned. Much more than that, it reflects the difficulty of maintaining any kind of party machinery in operation in the absence of a campaign, its psychological excitement, its threat and promise, and its trickle of financial contributions. So well established is the part-time tradition of our politics that the efforts of a small-town Republican leader to set up and maintain a thirty-dollar-a-month store front headquarters led to accusations that he was just trying to find a job for his sister-in-law and sour remarks about this "terrible waste of party funds."

The reason for this attitude toward political organization is not difficult to discern. The neurotic individualism that makes Americans suspicious of any social institution has thrown a cloud of hostility around anything that smacks of "professionalism" in politics. It is almost certain death for a candidate to admit that he is a full-time politician. Loud and repeated yearnings to get back to the practice of law, the farm, or the family business are as required of our leaders as reverence toward motherhood. Political campaigns have to fit into the stereotype of frantic crusades to save the community

from "those scoundrels." The forms of party activity between elections must follow the pattern of Cincinnatus returning to his plow. To admit to the validity of permanent party headquarters and competent staffs of researchers and public relations experts would be to assert something about the policy-making importance of parties that the average American is not ready to accept.

It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the absence of conspicuous party structure between elections is a mere camouflage, that the empty store that was once campaign headquarters merely indicates a shift of the same activity to less visible centers. While party structures are maintained intact and operate at a high level of efficiency in a few large cities such as New York and Chicago in season and out, in most communities the closing of campaign headquarters is genuinely symbolic of the laying away of any continuity of organized party activity.

Now we must notice immediately, however, that what is suspended is "*organized* party activity." By this is meant the functioning of the various democratic procedures and organs by which the party draws into itself and involves in its activities the groups of citizens for whom politics is only a duty or diversion. The suspension of this kind of organization does not mean a moratorium on politics. It means, rather, that political activity withdraws from those proliferated forms that make up the party in full battle array to the more invisible, subtle, and undemocratic structures of what we call "the machine."

THE MACHINE

In Chapter 4 we discussed the problem of power and what happens when men fail to understand what it is and how it operates. In the prevalence of "machines" in American political life we have an excellent illustration of the point made there.

When men come together to form political parties and work for the election of some of their number to public office, their activities generate power. By their ability to grant or withhold nominations, to give financial support to some campaigns and stint others, and their legal status as agencies of the electoral process, parties are able to exact respect and even obedience from candidates and officeholders. This kind of influence generates power.

Theoretically this power is dispersed through the whole organization in reasonably democratic fashion, the forms and mechanisms of popular control differing from one location to another. And at critical times, notably on the eve of nominations and elections, the theory is followed in practice. Delegates from the various geographic areas represented within the unit involved come together to draw up platforms, choose candidates, and name party leadership for the next legal interval.

In those democratic countries in which there is a strong tradition of sustained party activity between elections, the handling of party power is reasonably democratic at all times. That is to say, there are established channels of communication and control through which the membership is kept in touch with headquarters and headquarters is made aware of sentiment in the hustings. In Great Britain, for example, party conferences are held from time to time for the express purpose of giving voice to membership opinion and an opportunity for interpretation of policy to leadership. In various forms the same thing takes place in other liberal democracies.

In the United States, however, our tradition of part-time politics, our tendency to deny the important role of party organization, have made it almost impossible to establish patterns of democratic control within the major parties. By refusing to accept the necessity for inter-election party activity we have undermined every legitimate effort to distribute

their power in a responsible way through the structures of political organizations.

This fact was brought home to me with dramatic impact several years ago in a gubernatorial election. In the days leading up to the actual balloting I worked closely with party leaders. They had managed to achieve a reasonable degree of efficiency in their activities and we "made voters," lined up rides for persons who needed them, and did all that constitutes traditional electioneering. The office from which we worked was well staffed and equipped. Files were in order and area maps kept up to the minute on registrations. A visitor would have been impressed by the appearance of competence and enthusiasm.

On Election Day itself an interesting thing happened. Steadily from dawn to dusk the order and efficiency of that headquarters deteriorated. Cards on voters were thrown in careless heaps on tables instead of being returned to alphabetized files. Records of every kind were scattered about the room and in danger of destruction underfoot. Maps were torn up for use as aids in locating particular neighborhoods. Every other violation of good procedure for office management could be seen repeated over and over.

We won the election. The next day janitors came into the party's headquarters, swept up the carefully compiled records, and burned them! The following year the local organization had to spend weeks reassembling its basic material.

This is admittedly an extreme example, but it reflects the very strong hold of the election-centered psychology on our American parties. When it was suggested to the workers that this seemed a very wasteful and shortsighted way to operate, their reply was to ask what good that stuff was after the votes were counted. Reference to the fact that there would be another election in two years was met with the kind of look accorded people who talk about the end of the world! Any-

thing could happen in two years. No one in headquarters had any real stake in a sustained party efficiency.

The result of this psychology has been to *force,* and I use that word advisedly, to *force* a great deal of power into the hands of the men who *do* have a stake in sustained party discipline and who are in a position to accept the authority that the rank and file cast aside. . . . That last sentence might almost be an informal definition of an American political machine.

When the election excitement is over, when the volunteers have returned to their other interests, when there is no money coming in with which to pay for a meeting hall and the crusaders of yesterday are being depicted as swine with their snouts in the public tax trough, the mechanisms by which parties are supposed to be run disintegrate. But the job that the party is required to do continues to need doing. Decisions must be made about supporting or opposing particular proposals. The stand of the party must be co-ordinated among the various branches and bureaus of government. The pulse of the public must be carefully felt. The performance of men in office has to be watched against the next nominating conventions. Myriad details of integrating and correlating must be handled by someone.

The chief source of the power of the political machine, then, is the default of democratic mechanisms *within* the party. It is *not* the natural corruption of politicians. Nor is it the failure of the voters to attend to their responsibilities *in elections.* It is the complete collapse of membership participation in party responsibility between campaigns. Political machines, like any human enterprise, are subject to fearful abuses. They are more open to corruption than many aggregations of power because they have developed in response to the abdication of power by those who ought to be handling it. The fact that they operate under cover makes opportunities for misuse particularly difficult to resist and prevent. *But,* far

from being inherently the fiendish contrivance of wicked men, they are the inevitable by-products of the efforts of our moralistic individualism to ignore the realities of political life!

It is difficult to see the full truth of this because of the publicity given to the very dramatic situations in which machine rule now maintains itself by methods quite unrelated to the source of its original power. In some urban areas, political patterns reflect the general corruption. Voters are intimidated, ballot boxes stuffed, and machines engage in every imaginable skullduggery in order to avoid being overthrown. In spite of the attention focused on these situations, they are by no means typical. The kind of machine rule that we have come to associate with such sore spots is merely the manifestation in political life of a viciousness that can be duplicated in most other parts of such communities. It is as false to attribute this rottenness to politics as it would be to charge it against any other single activity in the area.

In the 1952 Presidential campaign, Adlai Stevenson spoke brilliantly to this point. In a speech delivered in Los Angeles on September 11, he argued that corruption in government is a symptom of immorality in all areas of our society. He compared government to a pump which "pumps up just what we are, a fair sample of the intellect, the ethics, and the morals of the people, no better, no worse."

Lincoln Steffens, whose muckraking of our great cities was mentioned earlier, was fascinated by the workings of the most notorious political machines of his day. Among other things he wanted to know the way in which they made their graft. He was not long in finding out. From Abe Ruef in San Francisco to Tweed in New York, he heard the same story. Machines made their money by selling privileges to the honest businessmen who denounced them so violently in election campaigns. When there was a franchise to be let, a traction contract coming up, or a municipal building to be erected, the machine did not have to go to the "honest" men. They lined

up outside its door, hat in hand, shoving one another for first place, bidding up the graft price until one was out in front so far that the others could not keep up. The one got the favor. The rest went home and wrote letters to the press denouncing municipal corruption! So obvious did this fact become to those who studied machine rule that Fremont Older, who had helped jail Abe Ruef, labored for years to get him released because he, Older, had come to see that the crooked politician was largely a tool of "honest businessmen."

Testimony to this same effect is given in less dramatic but more contemporary form by Chester Bowles, former governor of Connecticut. In a conversation with the author, Bowles was discussing the efforts that he had made to reorganize the top-heavy and inefficient structures of state government in Connecticut. Business and professional leaders in the state were enthusiastic about the idea, he pointed out, until they began to see that reorganization would inevitably alter the channels of influence that they had managed to construct through the familiar labyrinth. One by one the supporting groups began to ask that this or that proposed change be dropped. Finally the whole reorganization program was defeated. And the business leaders of Connecticut go on demanding that state government be made more "businesslike."

If anyone were to tell these honest men that their efforts to get special privileges for themselves are the currency which political machines convert into gold, they would indignantly deny the charge and point to the need for "cleaning up" politics.

The idea that a political machine is always or often the excrescence of a uniquely political corruption is a characteristic American distortion. It is one more of the ways in which we seek to ignore the facts of our social existence and the inevitable necessity for coming to terms with power. By concentrating on cities such as Chicago and New York we man-

age to preserve our prejudices and continue a wholly unrealistic conception of the political process in the United States.

The Christian, understanding social realities created by the nature of human interdependence, should be able to see the political machine for what it is—a response to the power and planning vacuum created by the American tradition of part-time politics.

There is, however, another reason for the existence of the political machine which the Christian should be particularly equipped to appreciate. Perhaps the best way to state it is to have recourse again to the experiences of Lincoln Steffens. This is the story in approximate terms.

A social worker was talking one day with a political boss about the problems of depressed people in urban areas. The social worker knew that scores of people in her own city went to the machine whenever they were in trouble. This she found hard to understand. After all, she reasoned, there are many social agencies the whole aim of which is to furnish aid in such situations. When she expressed this feeling to the boss, he laughed scornfully.

"Sure," he said, in effect, "when a man goes to a social agency they see to it that he gets justice. But he doesn't want *justice*. He wants help!"

This is a great source of strength for the political machine. In a government of laws it stands between the individual case and the inexorable workings of justice. It is to the political process what Jesus is to a fundamentalist, or the Virgin to a Roman Catholic—the assurance of mercy in the presence of judgment. And the importance of this function can be seen in the enduring quality of Tammany Hall and the continuing growth of the cult of Mary.

The analogy used is not meant lightly or irreverently. It fits at many points. If God himself does not trust entirely to his Justice but is ever ready to modify it in response to the promptings of mercy, how much more must one make allow-

ances where purely human standards of justice are involved? Because we have built a government of laws and mean to keep it such, we have created what might be called a flexibility vacuum, the need for some "give." When a young Puerto Rican gets in trouble in New York City or an old settler in California needs help with the property laws, there is generally someone ready to pick up a telephone and speak a mediating word to the man or agency at the other end of the wire. And since the line runs two ways, he can be sure that the phone will ring some day and it will be his turn to perform.

Even if there were no other basis for machine organization in politics, if the parties functioned with perfect and democratic effectiveness in all respects, there would still be established within the framework of laws little networks of letters and telephone calls traced by the demands of human beings for mercy and the need of all government for an element of human flexibility.

A political machine is a structure of informal relationships by which the integrating and co-ordinating functions of parties are carried on in the face of electoral default and by which the rigid requirements of justice are modified in the name of mercy. Machines *can* become the vehicles of incredible corruption; and they too often do. They are an inadequate response to a substantial need, an undercover means of doing what ought to be done in properly established and democratic ways. This is the source of their degradation, not the quality of their leaders or the nature of their basic function.

THE BOSS

As the political machine is in the eyes of most Americans the source of political corruption, so "the boss" is thought of as being the wicked man who pilots the machine. There is certainly a great deal of evidence to lend credibility to this

view. Whenever one thinks of political chicanery, the names of the most infamous bosses of history come quickly to mind. The biography of corruption in many of our large cities could apparently be written in terms of the acts and ambitions of one or two men. No wonder that the boss lurks in the shadows of the political scene, wafting to the audience the distinct smell of brimstone.

If we turn away from these more spectacular situations, however, and study the working of political leadership in the average town or rural area, the demonism theory of bosses becomes untenable. More often than not, the source of a boss's power lies in the willingness of his neighbors to push their civic responsibilities off on his shoulders. Here, for example, is a fairly typical "boss biography" in my own paraphrase of the words in which it was told to me:

"I was the only one in my neighborhood organization who had a typewriter . . . and I knew how to run a mimeograph machine. The boys began pushing the clerical work off on me and I did it because no one else seemed willing. I sat up late nights writing letters, getting out handbills, and compiling lists of every kind imaginable. It was dull work. But I found that it was a great way to learn everything there is to know about a party. I memorized the dates and forms for filing petitions and submitting financial reports to the state organization. I learned to know what party members would pitch in and help with time and money—and what ones wouldn't. People who needed information got to calling me up for it. My name and phone number came to be identified in a lot of people's minds with the party.

"Well, the first thing I knew people were asking me to speak a word for them to so-and-so in city hall or even at the state house. At first I felt pretty backward about doing it. But I soon found that all of those letters going out over my name had made the name mean something. At least it looked

familiar to the boys at the capital. And before long I had a reputation for being able to get things done. Not big things, you understand, but tickets for the governor's ball, reservations at crowded hotels, world series passes, and stuff like that. Well, the more of this stuff I did, the more contacts I made and the more people felt obligated to me. So every year the things I could do got a little more important. And the things I was asked to do did the same. Now they tell me I'm one of the big shots in the state. And I guess I am."

That is, of course, an abbreviated version of an oversimplified account. But it gives the central truth about boss-power. What my informant did not say was that he learned in time how to write up reports of local happenings in such a way as to reflect credit and discredit on the right people, how he became friendly with a couple of newspaper men and, in return for little favors and inside tips, was able to shape their treatment of his friends and faction, and how he managed to remind some party leaders of important legal and social events while "forgetting" to notify others.

These omitted details do not alter the picture significantly. His strength still lay in the fact that he alone had accepted responsibilities which others could have shared; and they brought him great power. It is fascinating to note that to this day the boss of whom I am speaking is still doing a great deal of his party's clerical work himself. He has learned how to get power *and* how to *keep* it!

It is not at all unusual for a political boss to become such without fully realizing that this has happened. Several very influential men have assured me, and had no reason to lie, that they did not know how significant a role they had begun to play until they read in the newspapers that their word was expected to decide some important appointment or resolve a conflict of opinion in the party. A prominent New England journalist has expressed the opinion that this is probably the

truth. Political power is invisible and hard to measure. It can begin on a very small scale and snowball to tremendous proportions in no time at all.

What does the boss get out of all this? There is a tendency to answer this question in dramatic and exaggerated terms. It arises, like our understanding of machine corruption, from preoccupation with the most infamous of the urban situations. No doubt the leaders and captains of the big city organizations make fabulous sums from their power to dispense favors. There is no point in ignoring this obvious fact.

If we turn again to the more typical American situation, the kind in which most of us are involved or will become involved, the answer is something quite different.

Most political bosses in the towns and counties of the United States probably never receive any kind of direct cash pay-off for the real energy that they expend in directing the affairs of their parties. It is safe to say that in all but a few exceptional situations, the ability of the boss to cash in on his power depends on his being in or getting into some enterprise in which he can legally do business with the government or with those who wish, through him, to do business with the government. (And in some instances the boss of a very strong organization gets nothing more for his pains than favorable publicity for his grocery store or florist's shop.)

This fact of political life is so generally true that one can often trace the patterns of power in a strange neighborhood by looking into a few favorite political professions. Who gets the town insurance business? its construction work? Who supplies groceries to county institutions? From whose automobile agency does the state buy its trucks and cars? And so on. The answers to these questions often outline the picture of boss rule in a typical community.

In some instances the business relations of the boss with the units of government in which he is interested cannot stand investigation. Prices are padded, quality lowered, and

stocks accumulated beyond all reasonable need. But in at least as many cases the profit-taking by political leadership is quite legal in most respects. Where sealed bids are not required, for example, the boss will simply be informed of the lowest price stipulated in competitive bidding and can then shave it by one dollar and get the contract. At other times an excellent case can be made for retaining the firm owned by the boss because he has had so much experience in government work that he is actually the most efficient and economic operator to hire. This is often true in road construction, for example.

There are many political leaders who never have any dealings with government directly. They reap their harvest through those enterprises that *do* want franchises or contracts. Thus, a lawyer in politics may find that he is eagerly sought after by clients who need a favorable word spoken. A druggist discovers that his party power has led to an increase in his sales to those who want good contacts. A restaurant owner often makes capital of his banquet rooms and catering services.

Whatever one may think of the ethics of such relationships, it is difficult to show that they violate any law. And they are a far cry from the more open and obvious "graft" that one normally associates with political bosses and machines.

What has been said about the workings of political bosses may strike some readers as naïve. Certainly if one sets it next to the most infamous example of the boss stereotype, it looks rather inaccurate. Once again, however, these most notorious characters are by no means typical. In origin their power was much as I have described it; but many other factors have entered into the picture to make it both different from the terms of our discussion *and* wholly distinct from the kinds of situations in which most of us must actually carry our political responsibilities.

RE-ESTABLISHING PARTY DEMOCRACY

As one begins to think about the problem of overthrowing a political machine and unseating the boss he is likely to approach it with trepidation. In the abstract it can seem to be an almost impossible job. Yet the truth of the matter is that *most* political dynasties are remarkably frail and will fall at the merest shove.

Bucking the Organization

Political machine strength, except in special places such as Chicago, Jersey City, and so on, is largely psychological. The machine depends a great deal upon the popular assumption that it can deliver votes to the candidates and favors to the public. Once that assumption has been attacked, it is a very difficult thing to defend. The reasons for this are obvious:

In the first place, the boss always promises more than he can deliver. This is in line with the best principles of advertising. But it means that there are always disgruntled customers who got neither performance nor their money back. They talk a lot and usually talk loudly when encouraged to do so; and like the diner who finds a mouse in his stew, they are likely to cause some general uneasiness among other customers. When the machine can be shown to have failed and the impression gets abroad that it is weakening, the desertions are often more numerous than the opposition can exploit.

In the second place, the very nature of what a political machine offers is somewhat secret. It is more than a little embarrassing for the boss to have to start reminding the general public or even his own followers of how many favors he has distributed. This sort of self-defense often hastens the end more than passive acceptance.

Third, political machines and their leaders are, as we have

seen, outgrowths of public inertia. When any substantial number of voters gets excited enough to force a primary or pack a caucus, there is little that the organization can do to stop them. A certain amount of stalling and reliance on technicalities, hoping that the excitement will die down, is the usual procedure. In the face of sustained attack by people who know the laws governing party operation, the boss and his followers will frequently quit cold.

This is not mere theorizing. It has happened again and again. In New York toward the end of the last century and in the first part of this one, various reform movements have managed to establish themselves and sweep away existing organizations with very little trouble. Even big city bosses with great wealth and physical violence at their disposal have difficulty standing against vigorous public assault. In smaller towns and in rural areas the process is even easier *where the voters are determined.* There have been several instances of apparently powerful political machines collapsing overnight when someone with a substantial following and a loud voice rose to challenge them.

The following incident, told me by a colleague, illustrates better than anything else the largely psychological quality of political influence:

"One day," my friend reports, "a student came to me in great distress. He had run through a stop light and been arrested for reckless driving. There was a police crusade going on and he had been ordered into court to stand trial. He wondered if I knew a good lawyer who might handle his case for a reasonable fee.

"I cast about in my mind and ran my eye down the column of attorneys in the phone book. One name leaped out at me. He was a chap that my wife and I had dined with only a few weeks before at the home of a mutual friend. I put in a call and soon we were chatting cordially. When he heard the

problem that I had called to put before him, he replied with hearty assurance that I was to give it no further thought. He would take care of everything.

"The next day my student came in with relief shining in his face and told me that the indictment had been quashed, thrown out of court. My lawyer friend had visited the prosecutor and had the matter dropped. This, of course, took me completely by surprise. I had merely hoped that the attorney would handle the case in the usual manner, but moderate his fees in view of the student's financial condition. What had produced this dramatic denouement?

"A bit of inquiry brought out the facts. The lawyer that I had called was also majority leader in the Town Council. The public prosecutor was of the same party and faction. My perfectly innocent call had been interpreted as an effort to get this boy 'off the hook' by securing the quashing of the indictment against him. And that's what had happened.

"Why had the majority leader of the Town Council done this for me? Because he had assumed that only a person with substantial influence would have dared to ask the favor which he *thought* I was asking!

"But this comedy of errors did not end there. People heard of this episode and from time to time in the next few weeks I was approached on behalf of various felons by persons who supposed that I had political pull. *I* had become a kind of boss!

"Then, to cap the climax, my wife informed me that we had not actually dined with this particular lawyer at all. It had been another man with a similar name."

This is, of course, an unusually dramatic manifestation of the illusory quality of so much political power. My friend had called to ask one thing. The lawyer had inferred that he meant another. He had also inferred that my friend must be a man of influence to ask such a thing. And the wheels of

political favor had been put into motion by an erroneous phone call.

Political power among machine politicians is often based in large part on the illusion of influence. Supposing that one has power with A, B may grant him favors. Seeing B grant him favors, A begins to do the same. And a circular development of political strength has begun. The whole thing is based on erroneous assumptions. If at any time the circle is broken and the poverty of real power betrayed, the boss is finished.

Another factor in our political structure that makes a machine subject to relatively easy overthrow is the grass-roots orientation of its power. As we saw earlier in our discussion of personality politics, the real source of a party's strength is in the personal relationship of individual candidates and leaders to the man across the street and the woman down the road. This means that the power in our parties flows very largely from the bottom up. Discontent at the four corners can shake a political organization much more violently than disfavor on the part of national committeemen. No matter how important the machine, no matter how exalted the position of the boss, any substantial showing that they no longer enjoy the confidence of the people whose votes will elect or defeat candidates will cause wholesale defections from their camp.

Thus, there is no need for elaborately structured reform organizations in order to storm the bastions of political power. The best results possible can be achieved right in one's own back yard. Audible discontent with the faction in power, protests against the quality of party leadership, and threats to defeat the loyal slate come next fall will be picked up fairly quickly by the radar-like sensitivities of the men who are running for office. And they are likely to find that the boss and his followers are suddenly expendable.

There is one last word to say on this subject. It comes both

as a reason for the frailty of political machines and as a warning. One of the explanations for the ease with which party organizations can be overthrown lies in the refusal of a wise political boss to fight hard against such overthrow. Experienced leaders have learned to ride with the punches. They know that the more resistance a machine puts up when efforts are made to remove it, the greater will be the resentment and reform energy generated. Fall easily, they feel, and the public writes off your strength as greatly overrated. In so doing they lose much of their fear of you and much of their enthusiasm for reform. Fight hard and you verify the worst tales of your intrenched power and consolidate the reform zeal of the voters. There is a good deal of wisdom in this view. Experience has proved it sound. In many large cities the record shows that an easily won victory for reforming forces usually led to a quick comeback for the deposed machine. A hard-won fight has almost always heralded a long period of reform control.

Creating New Patterns

The fact that machine rule in politics is easily overthrown under most circumstances and almost as easily re-established suggests that mere exposure of the "bad guys" and their methods of operation does not in itself root out the basic difficulty. Obviously, something far more effective is necessary than periodic grand jury investigations and spurts of civic indignation. Men have written whole books in an effort to suggest more lasting approaches to political reform. In spite of their analyses and a great deal of discussion of corruption in our public life, very few communities can honestly claim that they have licked the less savory aspects of machine rule.

There is no simple answer to the problem. But there are four things that can be said which serve both to summarize what has been discussed in this chapter and suggest the direc-

tion in which we must look for the re-establishment of responsible party organization:

First, political machines come into existence to fill a power and planning vacuum. In our two-party system, the party organization has a very important job of integration and coordination to do. If it is not carried on by the rank-and-file members of the party, it will inevitably draw into existence the kind of improvised patterns of power control that we know as machines.

Second, machine operation is not inherently corrupt, but is allowed to become so because it is extra-legal and subject to no effective scrutiny. If the function served by the machine is recognized as the proper responsibility of the democratically organized party apparatus and allowed to operate openly and in a prescribed manner, the opportunity for corruption will be greatly minimized.

Third, most political machines are corrupted not by the temptation to steal the petty cash but by the willingness of "honest" men to buy favors. The source of "big-time" graft is the desire of the average man and woman to get something for nothing or to get more than his share of some opportunity. There are many devices such as sealed bids, central purchasing, and itemized budgets that can make this kind of game more dangerous for those who would play it. (But of all people, the realistic Christian is least likely to suppose that human self-seeking can be completely eliminated.)

Fourth, well, let us begin here with an illustration:

From 1932 to 1948 the Democratic party nationally won an amazing string of election victories. True, it suffered some setbacks from time to time, but these were minor when compared with the dramatic character of its conversion from a chronic minority to an obvious majority party. There can be no doubt that one of the factors in its success was the hard work and loyalty of its big-city machines.

But here is a fascinating fact. Beginning about 1936, many

of the major Democratic machines began to go into a very serious decline. In Kansas City, New York, Chicago, Memphis, Boston, and many smaller places, established organizations deteriorated steadily *while participating in one national victory after another.* Leaders were picked off by grand juries, majorities dwindled, and popular indignation rose. This was contrary to every law of politics. The successful machine is *supposed* to thrive and be relatively immune from attack, so long as it remains successful. Why were these bosses in trouble?

There is no easy answer. Undoubtedly particular local conditions had something to do with the result in each case. However, those who watched this process take place explain it largely in terms of the change in the national atmosphere that took place under the New Deal. Millions of people who had been afraid of their government began to see it in the warm personality of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Fireside Chats. Those who had been dependent on local bosses for charity or odd jobs began to receive relief checks from the W.P.A. or work in the C.C.C. Men who had been helpless in the grip of intolerable labor conditions heard themselves encouraged by government to set up unions and demand more of the better things of life. In short, during the 1930's the United States began to resemble something akin to a national *community.* The old neighborhood orientation and its dependence on the power of the precinct captains started to break down.

In addition, politics began to take on more of an issue concern, and the issues were those dramatized by the President. The old American practice of interpreting political events entirely in terms of personalities at the local level received its first setback. It was not destroyed by any means. It is still with us and still a tremendous force in our political life. But it was shaken by the dramatic activity that went on in Washington after a long period of social stagnation.

One may not be enthusiastic about the prospects of bigger and bigger federal government that came into being in the thirties. But one need not be, in order to recognize the impact of the New Deal on the patterns of machine rule. Its dramatic presentation of issues and the spirit of national community that it generated hit its own bosses far harder than local forces of reform had ever been able to do.

Here, again, is a phenomenon into which the Christian ought to have particular insight. Men cannot escape their need for community. They cannot live happily with the myths of their isolated autonomy. They know themselves for the inadequate creatures they are, and inevitably reach out for some framework of form and authority. To some extent this is provided in our fragmented culture by the artificial social and fraternal structures that were discussed earlier. But men are never *wholly* deceived by their own contrivances. Where their lives come into close contact with hard reality, they want assurances of belonging and protection within a framework of *real* power and concern. They need a sense of belonging to something that can do more than turn out a line of cocked hats or perform faultlessly a meaningless mumbo-jumbo.

Whatever else it may be, a political machine is one kind of framework of community. It gives men a sense of being part of something that has power and will use it on their behalf. It cannot be effectively damaged unless and until the needs and loyalties of its followers are oriented around new centers of meaning and order.

Chapter 6

Sources of Political Power

Shortly before Election Day in a small New England town, a delegation from the League of Women Voters called on the Democratic candidate for the office of First Selectman. They wanted to question him about his qualifications and platform. The women, accustomed to being handled with kid gloves by politicians, noted with surprise that this particular man was giving them a very cool reception. Finally one of their number sought to establish their claim to his courtesy by asking, "Do you know what the League of Women Voters is?"

"Yes," snapped the candidate. "It is a group of high-minded women who always study carefully the qualifications of both candidates and then invariably vote the straight Republican ticket!"

This incident really took place. In a subsequent conversation with a close friend of the candidate involved, I expressed some amazement that he should be willing to alienate an influential group of voters.

"Don't worry about Dave," was the answer. "He knows just where all of his votes are coming from. And those gals can't give him any or take any of them away."

This episode dramatizes one of the less well-known facts of political life in the United States.

A CONTROLLED VOTE

When the average voter thinks of political power he is likely to imagine it as something stored in bulk in a vast reservoir that can be tapped at any point by a clever political leader. He listens to speeches and watches the antics of campaigning on the assumption that they are intended to swing masses of votes from one party to another. The process of winning an election seems to most of us something akin to saturation bombing. One hurls a variety of general appeals broadcast in the hope of hitting as many varied responses as possible.

The professional politician sees the whole business in a different light. Vote getting for him is a pin-pointed operation. It is based upon an understanding of the people, groups, and institutional loyalties of the community—and a thorough familiarity with the voting record of all of these. The traditional political leader believes that the outcome of an election depends not on *how* the people vote but on *which* people vote. He concentrates his efforts, therefore, not on trying to swing masses of unaffiliated electors into line behind his ticket, but on seeing to it that all those who can be counted upon to vote his way get registered and into the polling places on Election Day.

Those whose orientation is toward national political campaigns may find it difficult to understand this. Why does the local politician ignore the opportunity to make capital of dramatic issues and seek to stir great masses to rally to his support? There are several answers to that question:

First, the local political organization is incredibly badly manned in most communities. It is well staffed with heelers and greeters, men who know many voters by name and belong

to a multitude of social groups. But at the grass roots neither party has access to the kind of people who are capable of dealing effectively and intelligently with dramatic issues. The newcomer to politics will be as impressed by this lack on the one hand as he is likely to be by the personality-contact efficiency of the machine on the other. One of the easiest ways to test this is to send a letter to any local party organization asking for information on the candidates' stand on a particular issue. Such a query will bring immediate evidence of the brotherly affection that the party has for the sender. But what is ordinarily forthcoming in the way of a reply to the substantial question is shockingly irrelevant or incompetent. The average political leader at the neighborhood level of campaigning has no facilities for dealing successfully with issues, even if he were disposed to do so.

Second, politicians are instinctively afraid of stirring up the electorate in vague and undisciplined ways. They have learned from experience that an aroused citizenry is dangerous to everything falling under the heading "Genus Politician." They have seen an unwise choice of campaign issues lead, for example, to a reform wave that sweeps both major parties into the dump. At times a tactless charge or proposal has been known to bring about searching questions and even legislative investigations. Any technique of campaigning, the results of which cannot be reasonably accurately predicted and carefully controlled, is frowned on by the average grass-roots political leader. He is in the business of politics, and he is unlikely to do anything that will upset the market, even though it may bring him temporary profit. Just as an automobile dealer is not inclined to expose the weakness of his competitor's car for fear of having the same treatment meted out to him, so the politician will avoid trying to win an election by tactics that may snap back in unexpected ways.

Third, all politicians are guided by two primary objectives. One is, of course, the winning of elections. The other, equally

important, is keeping control of the party organization. Here, again, issues are a bit dangerous. When you stir up public interest and political activity in general and uncontrollable ways, you expose the established machine to risk of grave challenge. People who get really excited about politics are apt to want some effective voice in making political decisions at all levels. They may be dissatisfied with the answer in terms of program and personnel that the party is offering. They will undoubtedly expect a better performance than can be extracted from existing leadership. They may throw their weight behind minority factions within organizational ranks or even put up men of their own choosing for the inner councils of party power.

For the professional politician, then, the basis of political power is a controlled vote. Not in the sense of being able to dictate what individuals shall be allowed in the polls or which votes are to be counted; but in the sense of being able to motivate certain elements in the community to vote in predictable ways.

This will explain a phenomenon of American politics that many people have found difficult to understand—the relative coolness of both major parties toward support of an active kind from labor unions, volunteer committees, and similar forces. In 1952, for example, both the Citizens for Eisenhower and Volunteers for Stevenson found themselves many times at swords' points with the regular organizations of their respective candidates. The parties were quite obviously afraid of the influence which the nonprofessional groups were developing as they conducted vigorous campaigns at all political levels. The amateurs had a way of stimulating voter interest that boded ill for the quiet and orderly life which political machines like to enjoy. Many Republican and Democratic leaders spent as much time trying to short-circuit their volunteers as they did working for their parties.

This has also been the fate of labor political action com-

mittees. In some states they have been welcomed by party regulars. In many others they have been given to understand that they are not wanted. Their money is as good as anyone else's; their votes the party is happy to have. But as for their nasty habit of working at the grass roots to do many of the things that the party does not want done—this had better be left to those who understand politics!

So vigorous is the opposition of some politicians to anything that seems to threaten their hold on the party machine that it is not unheard of for the regulars to "throw" an election, deliberately sabotaging their own candidates in order to destroy some feared element within their own ranks. This is reported to have happened in a gubernatorial contest in a Midwestern state just a few years ago. One of the major parties had experienced within its ranks the rapid rise of a man who was in no traditional sense one of its stalwarts. He had earned a name by his contributions to the national defense effort while holding an administrative position in Washington. His following with the ranks of the regulars was very small, but the public enthusiasm that his name aroused made it clear that he was someone to be reckoned with.

Since the coming election looked like a bad one for his party (a variety of factors made defeat seem likely), the party gave this man the nomination. But having given him the nomination, it then proceeded to give him the "treatment." Inquiries at various headquarters throughout the state revealed that the regular party machine was doing practically nothing to elect its candidate. No cars were available for persons wishing to be registered. Absentee ballots had to be pried out of the men who should have been distributing them freely. Local candidates openly disavowed the man who headed their ticket. And on Election Day, known opponents of the gubernatorial aspirant were happily driven to the polls by the automobiles of his own organization. He was being made a horrible example to those who might in the

future be tempted to try to short-cut the established channels of advancement within the party.

Looked at from many points of view, this sort of performance is inexcusable. But it makes a certain amount of sense to one who has accepted the traditional lines of political authority and is accustomed to thinking in terms of the orthodox exploitation of party strength. This willingness to throw an election in order to maintain the *status quo* is a natural outgrowth of the personality orientation of American political life. Politicians work long and hard to build up their contacts, to familiarize themselves with the people who make up their constituency. Since most of them have little knowledge of party program and little interest in abstract political principles, they come to think of their network of personal relationships and influence not as a tool of the party, but as being in fact the party itself. The focal point of party purpose becomes for them the web of co-operation and interdependence in which they are involved.

Examined from this point of view, the bright-eyed young man who plunges carelessly into this carefully balanced program of reciprocities is actually endangering the entire party structure. His disregard for seniority, precedence, and protocol, his emphasis on issues over which the very core of the faithful may be divided, loom as terrible threats to what seems to the party leaders to be the essence of their organization.

To some extent, of course, the arguments that party regulars muster to defend their resistance to the kind of fresh blood that we have been discussing are rationalizations of their desire to maintain their own power. There is good reason to suppose, however, that they represent also not only the earnest conviction of some of these men but a reality of political life. History furnishes a number of examples of parties that have soared like skyrockets under the impetus of some aggressive newcomer or young turk faction, only to

disintegrate disastrously after the first blaze of glory. This has been particularly true of reform movements. They often sweep down upon the established parties, seize power by something approaching acclamation, perform brilliantly for a short time, and then fall apart. They lack the intricate structures of know-how, loyalty, and self-interest that hold the traditional party together through many difficult days.

The dependence of the orthodox political mind on a controlled vote accounts for the fact that politicians tend to be somewhat unimpressed by public opinion polls. In the 1948 campaign, for example, there was much less defeatism among experienced Democratic politicians with regard to the chances of Harry Truman than there was among his nonprofessional supporters. Granted that very few people in any category thought Mr. Truman had a chance of re-election, the battle-scarred veterans of the ward skirmishes were less pessimistic than the average. Mr. Truman himself insisted at the time and still insists that he was fairly sure of his own re-election. How is this possible in view of the fact that public opinion polls showed Thomas Dewey an easy victor?

The answer seems at least in part to be that Mr. Truman and the professionals do not look at the mass vote. They try to figure what groups in the population are likely to turn out and how these groups will cast their ballots. They know that a certain percentage of the population will not bother going to the polls, but will shrink from admitting this to opinion samplers. Thus, the professional predicts in terms of fragmented social response rather than a majority of the total electorate. And in some cases he comes closer to the result than the scientist!

Perhaps we can sum up what has been said so far in this way: Political power, like all other kinds of power, is not something that a party leader creates upon demand by direct access to the raw material of human necessity and conviction.

A large part of it is generated by the skillful movement of pieces, each of which has a recognized value and function.

Let us look for a moment at some of the counters that are most often found where this game of politics is played.

Personal Contacts

So much has been said in this book, and in the present chapter particularly, about the importance of personality factors in American politics that it may seem repetitious to raise the matter again at this point. But no discussion of the specific sources of political power could be even partially adequate without its inclusion.

When you talk politics with an active party member at the grass roots, you will find it almost impossible to get him to discuss the subject in anything but personality terms. "Well, what have you got against so-and-so?" is often the first response to any effort to get the conversation on to issues. These latter are widely regarded as nothing but rationalizations in terms of which to criticize a particular leader or faction.

This attitude reflects the average politician's realistic appraisal of the basis of his own strength and that of his colleagues and opponents. The strong candidate or leader is the one who has a great variety of social contacts, a great many people who will vote for him or as he suggests because of their personal association with him or with the community groups of which he is also a member.

The significance of these "contacts" can be seen in the readiness with which they are advanced as "qualifications" for nomination and even election. I have on occasion been a participant in groups that have asked candidates for office to cite their fitness for the post they are seeking. Over and over again the replies to such questions have produced long lists of organizations, orders, and religious institutions with which the respondent has been affiliated. The persons who answer

thus do not do so out of the rational conviction that these associations do in fact qualify them for election. Their replies merely reflect the extent to which the importance of these contacts has been drummed into them in years of party activity.

So long as Americans try to interpret all social phenomena in good-guy–bad-guy terms, they will continue to rate qualities of personality at the top of the scale of political values. And so long as they rate these personality qualities so high, they will continue to vote for the men with whom they have had some direct or vicarious personal association.

Ethnic Groups

An interested student of social patterns in the United States could learn much of what there is to know about population shifts in this country by simply studying the ballots of the two major parties over a period of twenty years. With a few notable exceptions, the choice of candidates in local and state elections reflects the relative strength and self-consciousness of various ethnic groups within the community.

Such a student would discover, for example, that there is an increasing number of Italian-American names on city and state tickets throughout the whole eastern half of the nation. He could trace the decline of Old Family power in Boston, the rise of the Irish to positions of prominence, and then the gradual displacement of the Irish by the more recently arrived Latins.

One of the most potent sources of political strength is to be found in self-conscious minority groups in any area. This does not simply reflect personal associations. It springs from the discovery by struggling new Americans that one of the channels through which they can achieve status and opportunity for financial preferment is politics. In the voting booth there is no measurement of traditional social acceptability. The vote of a Rourke or a Gambardella counts for as much

as that of a Saltonstall or a Cabot. By throwing their votes to the party that gives their members the most desirable spots on the ballot minority, ethnic groups have managed to acquire real power in the political life of the nation. And they have become sources of great strength to the machines that have managed to woo them successfully.

Not all foreign-origin communities have managed to acquire political recognition in proportion to their numbers. Sometimes, as in the case of Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans, a combination of strong prejudice on the part of the majority of our citizens plus a disinclination to be politically active on the part of the individual members of the minority paralyzes their efforts at party recognition. At other times the people who in objective terms make up an identifiable community lack the sense of self-consciousness that makes them demand specific recognition. German-Americans in many parts of the United States have become so quickly assimilated that they have often neglected to assert themselves in political terms.

Excellent comedy was wrung by a motion picture of some years back from the sad plight of a candidate who was addressing a national-origin fraternal banquet and had forgotten what nationality was represented. This would indeed be a tragic situation. The ability to woo and win with flattery and patronage the various strong minorities is a real element in political success everywhere in the United States. In the play *State of the Union,* the comment of the candidate for "President" that he thought the Poles voted in Poland showed inexcusable naïveté, as indeed it was intended to do.

Fear and Favor

Contemporary psychologists tell us that the strongest motivation is the hope of reward plus a moderate fear of punishment. This is a truism that politicians have learned through

experience and have known well for a long time. It operates at three levels of sophistication.

Among relatively simple and uneducated people, ward and precinct leaders have been remarkably successful in planting the idea that "the party knows how you vote." Sometimes this is explained in terms of the different sounds of the bells on the voting machines, at other times by allegedly secret marks on the ballots that are handed out. However, of one thing most semi-literate Americans are completely sure. The party *knows* how they vote. Thus they willingly accept the further idea that they will be rewarded when they vote "right" and punished when they vote "wrong."

There is, of course, an element of reality in this picture. Party workers can often tell by the length of time taken in the voting booth whether a man is voting the straight ticket or splitting. Often, too, neighbors and merchants are in the pay of party leaders and engage individuals in conversation, learning how they intend to vote or did vote. In some extreme cases even more nefarious devices have been used. But added all together, the number of instances in which a man's vote is not secret comes to so few as to be negligible.

Nevertheless, so long as people believe this myth, they will be susceptible to pressures and temptations, selling their votes for promises and threats, fixed tickets, and the fear of draft reclassification. This is a reservoir of power wherever men and women are ignorant enough to believe it.

At a somewhat more sophisticated level, the use of fear and favor is equally successful and more understandably so. These are the voters who have something tangible to gain from a victory by the party and something to lose in its defeat. Here is where the patronage element enters the scene. Government employees, their wives, parents, and friends, know that there is much at stake for the individual in the fate of the party. The hope of getting a job and the fear of

losing it is a handy source of political solidarity among both Republicans and Democrats.

It is not only among government employees that this factor is at work. It can be seen in the restaurant proprietor who wants a liquor or floor-show license, the boardinghouse owner who has been allowed to ignore a fire safety ruling, and the man whose road has been kept better plowed by one party than the other. These people are under no misapprehension about the ability of party leaders to read their ballots. They simply have something to gain and something to lose, depending on which party is in power.

Finally, we have the top level of sophistication, those who simply believe that "things are better" for everyone when a particular party occupies city hall or the governor's mansion. Sometimes this reasoning is merely a rationalization of a more specific fear or ambition. At other times it represents an honest conviction that "our kind" ought to be in office.

Parties play to this attitude constantly. The candidate standing on a platform in his shirt sleeves is trying to persuade the laborers that their fate will be better in his hands. The gentleman in the conservative necktie who is pictured with his obviously genteel wife and well-scrubbed children seeks to insinuate himself into the confidence of the professional men and businessmen. These, too, are playing to the fear-and-favor ear of their audiences.

It is an easy thing to wax indignant about this element in our political life, and at its most primitive level it *is* something to be deplored and rooted out. But as we have seen in our earlier discussions of the place of self-interest in the democratic scheme, there is something inevitable and even constructive about a frank effort to elect officials and groups who can be expected to be sympathetic to one's own purposes and concerns.

The Christian understands that it is quite unrealistic to expect men to vote against their own best interests under

ordinary circumstances. He knows that men are in the greatest danger of overreaching themselves not when they are candidly seeking their own interests, but when they are pretending, in some cases even to themselves, that they are acting out of disinterested motives of civic responsibility. We have noted earlier that man is most fully manifesting his sinfulness not when he is acting selfishly, but when he is trying to make an absolute value of his own interests.

Men being what they are, we shall never achieve a condition in which voting is an exercise in rational unselfishness. A realistic Christian faith does not demand that we act upon the fallacious assumption that this condition either exists or is possible. Rather, it bids us seek to establish political patterns by which an equitable settlement of diverse demands for favor and the minimizing of the force of fear are made possible. The staunchest ally of rule by graft and intimidation is the pollyanna optimism that blinds itself to the need for such mechanisms of check and balance.

We have seen that the orthodox politician likes to think of politics as being chiefly the skillful manipulation of known quantities. He tends to shrink from any tactics of campaigning that might stir up the uncommitted and unpredictable elements in the electorate. He would prefer to lose an election rather than endanger the patterns of controlled voting that give him dominance in his own party or district.

The controlled election is obviously a perversion of the democratic process. Candidates are selected on the basis of group contacts. Campaigns are conducted in such a way as to conceal rather than clarify issues. The election itself reveals nothing about the public will, except its weakness. And party leadership remains in power not because of its effectiveness in formulating policy and choosing personnel, but on the basis of its skill in playing a highly complicated game.

One need not have a great deal of political experience to realize that the politician's dream of a completely controlled

vote rarely comes true. Into every campaign there are injected elements which threaten to upset the shrewd calculations of even the most perceptive leadership. A badly maintained road may lead to a fatal automobile accident. Teachers have been known to resign in disgust with the state of the public schools. A group of citizens forms a committee and takes the campaign ball away from the professionals. . . . Any one of these things, and other incidents like them, can force real policy or program questions into the open. There is nothing much that the politician can do except improvise and make the best of what comes to hand.

The experienced observers are inclined to believe that there is a special clause in the law of averages which applies to political campaigns. In an amazing number of cases the injection of a factor injurious or helpful to one side is balanced by the appearance of another to offset the impact of the first, so that in the long run the politician who plays for the controlled vote comes out a lot better than one might expect when examining this pattern in theory. This is particularly true at the grass roots where issues are difficult to dramatize and personalities are able to work at their most effective level.

THE MASS MEDIA

When Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for President the third and fourth time, somewhere in the neighborhood of 75 per cent of the newspapers of the country opposed him. Yet he won handily both times. This has led to a tendency to discount the power of the press, radio, movies, and television in politics generally. Certainly on the national level, when issues closely touching the welfare of masses of people are dramatically at stake, the voters seem to make up their own minds quite independently of the mass media.

It is a serious mistake, however, to assume that this same thing holds true at the grass roots. In local and state elections

and in struggles for power within parties, the press, for example, plays a very decisive role. This is not by flaming editorials proclaiming one faction or party to be the choice of the paper involved. Quite the opposite is the case. The real effectiveness of newspapers lies in the day-to-day reporting of events that may seem to have little or no importance in political terms.

Now let us be clear immediately that this is not intended to be an indictment of the American press and radio as conscious allies of any political party. One of the encouraging facts of public life has been the willingness of many papers and radio commentators, great and obscure, to dig out the "facts" no matter who might be hurt by them. The cases in which the mass media are deliberately slanting or selecting news for the conscious purpose of hurting or helping political groups are hopefully rare.

It would be naïve, however, to suppose that they cannot be a source of political power without *choosing* to be such. In communities all over the country the mass media exert influence more or less unwittingly because of the very nature of news. When people of local note give parties, their guest lists make the society page. When the president of the bank addresses the Kiwanis Club, his remarks, often touching local matters, become eleven o'clock news. If one party or faction in the community can afford a public relations man to plant anecdotes about its personalities and to scatter press releases on the slightest provocation, the newspapers and radio stations naturally use these if they are at all appropriate items.

Beyond this, most small town news channels have a fairly rigid policy concerning stories that might damage the "better families." This does not extend to concealing major sins, but it frequently covers up the kind of misdemeanor that is made much of when committed by one of the less reputable citizens. There are communities in the South, for example, in which

the issuance of a speeding ticket to a Republican politician is a front-page item, while a serious accident involving a Democratic bigwig gets no play at all. And there are cities in the North in which Democrats must be like Caesar's wife in order to avoid unfavorable publicity.

Gradually over a period of time those who enjoy the favor of the mass media gain—not from editorials but from friendly reporting—an aura of respectability which has great political value in this personality-centered culture. Their names become associated with the articulation of noble sentiments; their faces are remembered as pleasant, responsible, and in association with good causes or domestic felicity. This pays off at election time. Whether candidates themselves or merely the conspicuous supporters of others, their popularity can be put to effective use in garnering votes.

ISSUE-ORIENTED FACTORS

In spite of the most vigorous efforts of traditional politicians to keep politics oriented around personalities and the various nonsubstantial factors that we have been discussing, issues of various kinds do keep intruding themselves into the political picture—even at the local level. This has always been true, but it is becoming a more and more common phenomenon every day. The development of the sense of national community, discussed earlier, has contributed greatly to this end. As Americans begin to appreciate their common involvement in broad national problems that cannot be wholly understood and solved by traditional personality politics, they inevitably become more conscious of substantial questions at the grass roots. This issue consciousness serves as a source of political power in two ways:

On the one hand, it constitutes a reservoir of support that can be tapped by any party or faction with enough imagination to see the opportunity. The most dramatic example of

this sort of thing in our recent history will be found, naturally, in *national* politics. The Democratic party very deftly used the tremendous economic changes through which the world was passing in the thirties to consolidate itself as the majority party in American politics for many years to come. Again in the forties it was able to seize upon the international crisis to assert a kind of leadership that added to its lower economic bracket support the adherence of a great many middle and upper class groups that felt strongly the Hitler threat to Western civilization.

One of the interesting things to note at this point is that at the grass roots the increased interest in issues has reflected itself largely in terms of the dramatic national questions rather than their local equivalents or implications. It is not at all rare to hear candidates for such humble and non-policy-making offices as county clerk or municipal dogcatcher delivering themselves of ponderous utterances about the Taft-Hartley Act and the European Defense Community! That they have no voice in the operation of these forces does nothing to diminish their ardor. Thus, the voters of Sauk Prairie are given a choice between a dogcatcher who favors more ground troops in France and another who leans toward a massive air force. One can only imagine the trepidation with which stray dogs await the voters' decision on this matter!

This sort of thing has little value in the democratic process except to reveal the awareness of politicos of the element of issue consciousness in the electorate. It would be a mistake to assume that these Grange Hall orators really think that their opinions on foreign affairs can have direct importance. They are fully conscious of the fact that they are going through motions which have a purpose quite different from their apparent intent; and that the purpose is to satisfy an issue concern without discussing the questions that are really involved in the immediate community.

The extent to which general appeals to abstract issues move any substantial number of voters is difficult to measure. Some students of our politics are quite sure that issue discussion does nothing more than bring out people who might otherwise have stayed at home, that no significant numbers of voters choose their party or switch loyalties on this basis. Other commentators, with equal reason, argue that slogans and promises relating to dramatic issues can be used to produce a critical change in public feeling at all political levels. There is no room here, nor for that matter enough wisdom, to settle this lively debate. Perhaps the best generalization with which to take our leave of it is this: Where national policy decisions are at stake, people probably tend to be influenced significantly by discussion of issues. But in their reactions to local problems they are still primarily personality oriented.

Thus, the utility of the open reservoir of issue concern is largely dependent on the specific situation in which it is to be used.

There is, however, a source of power in particular issues that has not been covered above. That is the generation of pressure groups that work with varying degrees of effectiveness in support of those candidates and factions which seem most friendly to the groups' objectives. Here the power is derived not from direct, general appeals to voter concern but from the activities of the organizations brought into being by these concerns.

Pressure groups work in one or all of three ways:

They may operate in a fairly indirect manner, holding national conferences, issuing policy statements, planting articles in newspapers and magazines, making pamphlet material available to clubs, schools, and business groups, and so on. These are the opinion-molding organizations. Various foreign policy foundations, economic study associations, and public health organizations would come under this heading.

Such groups rarely endorse parties or candidates, but by various means they are able to enhance the prestige of friendly individuals or factions. An invitation to appear on a New York *Herald Tribune* Forum or a Foreign Policy Association platform can mean a great deal politically. A similar recognition by a local League of Women Voters or Civic Improvement Society can mean as much at the grass roots.

The difference between this kind of thing and the direct appeal of a politician to issue concern is that *here* the issue becomes the basis on which prestige-bearing personalities of groups recognize the designated candidate. Thus, a happy compromise is achieved between straight personality politics and a substantial orientation. The lucky individual is identified with the "better elements" because his stand on a particular question has won their favor.

Pressure groups may operate in a somewhat more direct and obviously political manner. The great majority of them do. These are the "lobbyists." They may engage in all of the pamphleteering that characterizes the first group. But they go beyond this and exert direct pressure on government bodies. The national capitol at Washington and the capitals of the several states swarm with such pressure groups. They make personal visits to legislators and administrators, appear before committees, organize protest visits by "home folks," keep their employers informed of what is taking place, and whip up floods of mail on a moment's notice to deluge doubtful or recalcitrant politicians.

Every imaginable kind of economic, social, and patriotic organization is represented by this kind of pressure group. So valuable has such lobbying come to be regarded that scores of professionals make fabulous fees for attending to the interests of several clients. Labor unions, business firms, farm organizations, veterans' groups, and independent political associations have their agents clamoring at the doors of all government agencies on behalf of favored policies.

The approval of pressure groups such as these can mean a great deal to any politician, and their opposition has spelled death for many. Senator Richard Neuberger of Oregon reports the following experience at their hands:

While in the Oregon legislature, Neuberger indicated his support for a bill regulating the use of highway billboards. This, he felt, was long overdue because highways were literally hemmed in at places by unsightly signs.

When word of Neuberger's opinion got around, he was immediately set upon by lobbyists for the signboard interests. Unions of sign painters denounced him as a foe of labor. Pathetic letters covered his desk pleading with him not to rob landowners of the small sums they earned renting space for signs. He was pilloried as an enemy of free speech.

This same story could be duplicated or even made to look mild by scores of others with the same theme. Government and the politicians who operate it are subject to inhuman pressures at the hands of a multitude of lobbies. The candidates who play ball with these groups can be assured of reams of favorable publicity. Those who oppose them are given the axe in short order. Since these pressure groups are remarkably nonpartisan, they constitute a ready supply of power for a great many varied political forces.

Finally, pressure groups can work in very direct ways through the most elemental political channels. Thus, the C.I.O. has set up in most states well-organized political action committees, which function on a county, town, and precinct basis. They do everything that a political party does. They register voters, canvass neighborhoods, drive people to the polls, and endorse candidates for office. In return for this kind of support they expect and sometimes receive the right to "suggest" party policy on issues in which they feel an interest.

Not many pressure groups choose this direct method of operation. It takes a kind of dedication and treasury that do

not often go hand in hand in pressure groups. But there are ethnic associations, racial societies, and patriotic organizations which do emulate this kind of grass-roots direct action in highly limited ways.

There is no doubt that pressure groups play an important part in the structure of political power in democratic politics —particularly those which give direct and vigorous support to specific candidates. But there has obviously been a considerable exaggeration of their role in many circles.

Americans, knowing their own and their neighbors' addiction to a highly individualistic orientation, have made increasing use in recent years of the bogey man known as "the interests." We are told that millions of innocent Americans are in danger of casting their votes the wrong way because of the power of the N.A.M., or that political parties have been bought up lock, stock, and barrel by the fabulous treasuries of the labor movement.

Here, again, we have an attitude to which there is some truth. The N.A.M. does put out press statements and pamphlets intended to encourage certain political tendencies in the public. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. does support the campaigns of its favorite candidates and even forms committees to aid these latter in their fight for election. Certainly in long-run terms, in the shaping of the attitudes out of which decisions spring, these activities play some part.

The assumption, however, that cabals of businessmen or labor leaders have great strength in politics at national and local levels is unrealistic. In fact, one of the constant complaints of the men who run the unions and the business groups is that their members pay so little attention to them when it comes to making up their minds on political matters. Labor officials, for example, in one state have seriously considered in recent years the complete abandonment of active campaigning in local elections. They see some value in national action because they serve as a platform for general

propaganda and education purposes. But they have begun to doubt that conspicuous labor electioneering has any real value.

Certainly this question is raised by the results of the last election in which Senator Taft of Ohio ran for his Senate seat. Some labor leaders insist that the obvious participation of the unions in that campaign gave Taft more votes than it took from him. Nonmembers of unions resented what appeared to them the efforts of "labor bosses" to tell them how to vote. The N.A.M. learned this same lesson at an earlier date.

In a sense the attribution of great power to labor and business organizations in politics represents an effort to deny the reality of class and economic group interests and divisions. The American who does not like to admit the existence of social classes with tangential, if not opposed, interests is somewhat embarrassed by the way in which election results tend to follow zoning lines in most communities. If workers and their employers have the same interests, if class is simply a Communist fiction, then how does one explain the divergence of political affiliation between Republican "fat-cats" and Democratic "plebians"?

The easiest answer has been shown to be—the interests. Labor unions mislead their people and then drive them to the polls in dull-eyed batches to cast their meaningless ballots. Or the N.A.M. and the Chamber of Commerce fill their members' ears with hokum and get them to vote in response to the demands and advantages of a very specialized pressure group. There are no social classes and opposed economic elements in the United States. It is all the work of the pressure groups, says our American tradition.

What is true of business and labor organizations is also true of veterans' groups, religious societies, and similar associations. They have a kind of political power. Their campaigns of education and propaganda do something to form

the national state of mind; on issues falling within their particular field of specialization, they can often persuade lawmakers and political leaders that their opinions reflect the point of view of their constituents. But very few of them can really deliver any substantial number of their members' votes at those critical points at which the votes are needed.

The reason for this, of course, is that few people are members of only one such power bloc. Most of us belong to many, and the demands that they make or the choices that they urge upon us are always to some extent contradictory.

You will see here, then, that the weakness of such pressure blocs as real sources of political power lies in the fact that the average individual does not associate himself definitely with the goals or principles of any one of them. This is not true, however, of the ethnic communities that we discussed earlier. Italian- or Polish- or Irish-Americans are often manipulated in blocs through their foreign language associations, because these tend to be inclusive of the entire life of the individual involved in them. He belongs to a social club, a religious affiliation, a patriotic society, and in many cases even a labor union dominated by the members of that immigrant element. He reads newspapers printed in his native tongue and in some places sends his children to schools in which they are taught the history of their ancestors' land in the language of their fathers. In other words, there is an integration about such ethnic communities that makes them susceptible to far more effective control and delivery on Election Day.

The Christian will see in this whole pattern one more manifestation of the human presumption that we discussed earlier. Men who belong to the entire human family are always tempted to interpret their relationships in limited terms. In the name of labor, business, religion, nationality, and diverse abstractions, they make demands upon others and upon themselves in other roles. So long as they under-

stand the fragmentation of reality that this process represents and the partiality of their views of themselves and their relationships, the pull and haul of opposed interests can be a healthful thing. But when men allow themselves to be persuaded that they are exclusively laborers, businessmen, Catholics, Protestants, farmers, or Poles, they lose contact with the facts of their existence and become subject to wholly irrational behavior.

The sources of political power are too numerous and interrelated for any simple description and analysis. The involvement of one man in many social structures creates opposing pressures that complicate his own responses beyond hope of unraveling. The most sophisticated boss of the most efficient political organization is never really surprised when his calculations go wide of the mark. He knows from experience that free men living in a complex social order cannot be finally allotted to or claimed by any allegiance. But he also knows that their involvement in a variety of social patterns makes the job of influencing them far more complicated than it appears amid the enthusiasm of a clambake or torchlight parade.

Chapter 7

Joining a Party

Shall I join one of the major parties? . . . Everyone who is active in politics is asked this question from time to time. And the manner of its asking is strikingly similar to that of a small boy wondering whether he is ready to try the high diving board. Young people in the United States seem to find the prospect of party affiliation terrifying.

This attitude is not too surprising when one stops to consider the atmosphere in which we are all raised. Political parties and politicians tend to be regarded as creatures of the demimonde along with race-track touts, loose women, and sidewalk peddlers. Joining a regular party organization seems at best an act of high courage, and at worst a complete fall from grace. Parents have been known to threaten disinheritance or even suicide in the face of a child's decision to go into politics. It is not at all uncommon to have clergymen express serious doubts about the possibility of "remaining a Christian" once this dangerous course has been embarked upon.

It should be obvious from what has been said in preceding chapters that this is a somewhat melodramatic approach to the problem. Political parties are equivocal organizations. They can become corrupt and in turn make corrupt demands

upon their members. But mere party affiliation does not require the surrender of anyone's conscience. There are thoroughly honest men in the worst of the urban machines. They will probably never get very far into upper leadership ranks; but they are just as probably tolerated and given a chance to speak their piece along with everyone else.

As a matter of fact, some of the most experienced political observers testify that anyone who wants to protest against what he takes to be improprieties in organizational activities will get a better and more friendly hearing in a political machine than he is likely to receive in a large business enterprise. For one who knows many politicians personally, this is not difficult to believe. It is a part of their professional equipment to be tolerant and courteous. In addition, they know very well that the press is always ready to play up the complaints of an unhappy party member. For both personal and tactical reasons they are constrained to try to harmonize diversity in points of view, even where one of them is held by a small minority.

Temptation is certainly in the way of those who try to be good party members. It is easy to rationalize unethical or dishonest practices where the fate of an election hangs in the balance, particularly when one is able to tell himself, quite truthfully, that the other party is doing exactly the same thing. In his eagerness to prove that he is not a prig or naïve, the political novice may be prompted to carry out orders that violate his sense of morality.

This is no reason for anyone's refusing to bear the burdens of political responsibility. Men were made to face temptation, not hide from it. Had God chosen to do so, he could have created the world and everything in it without the capacity for evil. He chose instead to give us freedom, knowing that the freedom to sin is essential to the full stature of free men. Those who shrink from association with their fellows in

fear of temptation are rejecting the most precious attribute of their humanity.

The more significant facet of this question is its tactical aspect. Can one *most fully* express his Christian concern in politics by joining a party? Let us answer that question by first calling attention to some of the obvious facts of political life.

When the average voter goes to the polls on Election Day he is given a choice between two men and two programs. If he has followed the pre-election campaigning he probably has little use for either candidate and little understanding of either program. He has had no voice in the selection of the men or the formulation of the platforms. He holds his nose and votes for the lesser of two evils.

Who chose the candidates and wrote their campaign pledges? The men who run the two parties. Who authorized them to do so? The rank-and-file party members, either by explicit assent or by failing to avail themselves of ordained means of objecting.

Here is the first answer, then, to our question. The man who does not join a party has cut himself off from about 90 per cent of the decision making that goes on in democratic politics. He has delegated the power to set the level of personnel and the quality of programs to those who *do* become active party members. He has restricted his political influence to the barest minimum possible without actually neglecting his citizenship duties entirely.

There is something more to be said here. Since parties do in our system perform the work of interpretation and reconciliation that was discussed in Chapter 4, the Christian who refuses to involve himself in the day-to-day work of these major organizations is ignoring one of his best chances to make an effective witness at the very center of the most dramatic struggles of the community.

From time to time divinity school students ask me to help

them get some practical political experience. In order to give the most in the shortest time, I usually send them out to work with the ward leaders in the community's most depressed areas. There they are sent canvassing from door to door in rat-infested tenements and public housing projects. They rub elbows with all kinds of persons. Their responses to these experiences are usually the same.

Most of them find, first of all, that they are greeted more freely and naturally when they go out as politicians than when they go out as clergymen. People open the door and let them in, talk easily about their problems, and make no secret of their sins. They see in the politician a man who may be helpful and they respond eagerly to his overtures of friendship. Their answers to questions and their general manner is far more candid than it would ever be with either priest or pastor.

Many students report also that the political leaders themselves are anxious to talk with them about the ethics of politics. What is so wrong about what they are doing? Why do people treat them as outcasts? Does religion have anything to say about the myriad daily problems that the ward leader is asked to help solve? . . . Students return often hardly able to contain the excitement they felt after making what they sensed was their first close contact with real human need.

Should a Christian become active in one of the major parties? He most certainly should *unless* he can show a compelling reason for choosing some other means of discharging his responsibility to the realm of politics and some more effective means of witnessing to his faith amid the turmoil and need of social complexity. The burden of proof is on the one who stays outside of a party, not the one who goes in.

CHOOSING THE PARTY

Those who came to maturity in the thirties will find it difficult to understand how any politically sensitive person can feel that he has an option in his choice of parties. The ideological cleavage between the major organizations was then so wide, the partisan feeling on both sides so intensely bitter, that people just naturally fell into one of the two camps on the basis of their world-view. In would have been unthinkable for a New Deal sympathizer even to consider joining the Republican party; while a disciple of Hoover and Landon would have preferred death to the dishonor of Democratic affiliation.

Today, however, the situation has changed markedly. Time has softened the harsher lines of the New Deal and has mellowed the conservatives. It is a matter of record that the two major parties are closer together today than at any period in this century. As a result, it is once more possible for even politically intense personalities to feel some freedom of choice in the selection of their political camp.

This is an altogether excellent thing for the health of American politics. Until the present era of good feeling emerged from the clouds of ideological bitterness, the Republican party was rapidly being decimated by old age. No substantial number of young people wanted anything to do with it. The Democratic party was becoming more and more the exclusive province of the have-nots. Our two-party system was endangered by this kind of dramatic polarization. Today, however, an ample supply of young blood is flowing into the Elephant's veins. And the Donkey is once again learning to walk the middle of the road.

How is a particular individual to choose between them?

Unless he feels very strongly about the differences that still exist between national policy positions, the average

American will probably choose his party on the basis of the local situation. He will have one of three grounds on which to make that decision:

First, there is the question of how the parties stand on important local issues. One may find himself so completely in agreement with one side and so out of touch with the other that he has little trouble making up his mind. If the Republican position on schools, civic government, and state fiscal policy seems considerably more reasonable than that of the Democrats and no more dramatic problem crowds these solid questions to one side, the decision on affiliation makes itself.

Second, one must consider the possibilities of making oneself effective in the party chosen. Often one of the two organizations offers far better chances for leadership positions than the other. It may do so because it is the minority group or because its heads are anxious to bring fresh blood into the governing councils. Whatever the reason, the feeling that one will have a far better chance of making his opinion count in one party than in the other is a perfectly valid ground for selecting one's party label. This decision can represent a kind of prima donna psychology; when it does, it is a bad one. But an honest feeling that one has a contribution which can be made more effectively in this or that camp is fair ground for selection.

Third, it is always possible that one will feel an obligation to enter a party because it is so far from what he thinks it should be! Perhaps this course was chosen by many people who entered the Republican party in its most ineffectual years. Had this not been true to some extent, the G.O.P. could never have made its quick transition to the Eisenhower philosophy. I have had personal contact with a number of younger Republicans who would make no effort to defend their party's record on many critical issues, but said in effect that they had felt a strong obligation to try to bring the

mastodon "kicking and screaming into the twentieth century," to quote Adlai Stevenson. This is, of course, a very difficult course to follow—the more so because it will often compel the one who adopts it to array himself with those who are obviously less equipped for office than their opponents. However, if our two-party system is to survive, it will sometimes be necessary for conscientious people to make this choice.

MAKING A POLITICAL DEBUT

How does one *get* active in a party? This question is sometimes asked to the accompaniment of a helpless shrug and is obviously intended as the ultimate defense against an unwelcome sense of responsibility. But more and more often today the query is an earnest one and rises from a deepening conviction that party membership is essential to responsible citizenship.

Perhaps the first thing to be said in answer to the question is that it is somewhat easier for a newcomer to break into politics today that at many times in the recent past. This is true for several reasons:

First, the mobility that has characterized our nation since the close of World War II, the movement of populations and the growth of new communities, has weakened or destroyed many of the older channels of political effectiveness and bases of political power. Party organizations that once held whole cities in their grip now find themselves dealing with wholly different kinds of ethnic groups and economic levels. Cities and towns have been flooded with newcomers who have previously been unrelated to existing political alignments and owe nothing to the bosses and their henchmen.

These social changes have opened up gaps in what had been closed party ranks and have created positions of leadership that will have to be filled. They have also brought into being new problems that the old machine cannot easily solve

and new potentialities that the established leadership does not quickly sense.

Second, ours is a time in which both major political parties are undergoing dramatic changes in leadership and are involved in internal debates on matters of program and principle. While this is occurring chiefly at the national level, it has inevitable repercussions at the grass roots. At a recent meeting of the state chairmen of the Republican party, for example, observers remarked upon the fact that almost all of the chairmen present were relative newcomers to political leadership, new to their offices since the Eisenhower victory in 1952.

This was simply a reflection of the process of change. While political parties are, for the most part, controlled from the grass roots up, there are many ways in which events occurring at the top levels influence seriously the stability of lower eschelons. Mr. Eisenhower's nomination was won over the dying bodies of many of the men whose jobs are now being held by the newcomers who dominated the conference of state chairmen. They rode in with the wave of organizational change that usually accompanies a change in national party orientation.

While the flux within the Democratic party is not as dramatically evident, it is nevertheless serious. Mr. Truman's retirement from politics left the ranks of Democrats with no unanimously accepted titular leader. State organizations engaged in trying to decide which of the possible national figures available they could most profitably support. Inevitable differences of opinion in these matters make for factional disputes within state organizations. Such disputes open the door for the man or woman who wants to enter the political arena.

Finally, political action is more easily embarked on today because of the dramatic development of new methods of campaigning that has characterized the past few years.

Radio, television, movie shorts, neighborhood discussion groups, political action schools, and so on, have come to play increasingly significant roles in electing men to public office. Political techniques are rapidly changing under the impact of technological and public relations advances.

The result has been to make party organizations eager for men who have some expertness and experience in the new skills that are required to run an effective campaign. The young person who can write a really good radio speech or set up neighborhood study groups often rises very rapidly through the doorbell-ringing stages of political apprenticeship. And the man or woman who makes a "good appearance" on television may find himself skyrocketing to the top of party columns. A look at the national roster of both major parties will furnish many illustrations of this kind of rapid progress.

This, then, is *at least* as good a time as any for seeking party membership.

First Things First

It is difficult to make any generalization about the actual first steps in joining a political party that will apply to all organizations and localities. In some cases a new resident hardly has time to unpack his clothes before a party worker is on his doorstep inviting him to the next meeting of the caucus or assembly. In others the exact opposite is true. Men have been known to make diligent inquiries about membership, telephone the community leaders of their party, send in financial contributions at campaign time—and still receive no evidence that the organization even knew that they were alive. In the months immediately preceding the 1952 nominating conventions, for example, a colleague of mine who had just moved to a new town and had made no political contacts up to that time received three telephone calls his first week in the new house. One was from the Taft

faction in the local Republican organization, another from the Eisenhower group, and the third from the official G.O.P. Town Committee. Being a Democrat, he thanked them for their interest but preferred to wait for a chance to help his own party. When several weeks had gone by without any sound from Democratic headquarters, he telephoned and offered to give his services in the forthcoming campaign. He was greeted by puzzled hostility, passed from one person to another, and finally told that someone would "get in touch" with him later. That was the last he ever heard from the local Democrats.

The answer to these differences seems to lie in the relative strength of the parties. A party that is well entrenched in power and used to carrying the district is less likely to be interested in new members. It is doing all right. Why add more hands to share the credit and favors? A party that is on the rise will have the opposite attitude for the opposite reasons. Every newcomer means one more vote and one more worker in the needy cause.

Let us suppose, however, that we are dealing with a community in which there is a fairly even division of power. Sometimes one party wins; sometimes the other. In such circumstances both parties will be receptive to strangers, but not so eager for them that acceptance and advancement will be inevitable. What is a reasonable course of action in such a situation?

The obvious first step is an analysis of the political set-up of the community. Occasionally this can be done through the publications of some civic group such as the League of Women Voters or the political action committee of a trade union. In some localities, organizations of this sort have prepared very helpful pamphlets for the edification of new voters.

For the most part, however, information on the political facts of life must be gleaned from various sources. One of the

best of these is likely to be the file of back copies of the local press. Those issues published in the weeks before elections are apt to give a fairly clear picture of the personalities and factional relationships in both parties. Wherever possible, a conversation with the editor or a political reporter should follow up the digging in the library. In almost all towns the gentlemen of the press know much more about the patterns of politics than they can publish, and they will yield invaluable information to someone whose motives they do not distrust.

Once the basic political alignments and powers have begun to come clear, a little judicious talk with neighbors and local businessmen will begin to pay off. What one learns from such sources must be distrusted until it has been cross-referenced. Even then it ought to be taken with some reservations. But without going overboard for any one explanation or point of view, a reasonably intelligent person can deduce a good deal from a scattering of informal conversations. It is not *what* he is told that teaches him. It is the relationship between the *what* and the by *whom* that is significant.

While engaged in the process of learning the fundamentals of local politics, the political novice should begin to make a name for himself in his immediate community. This does not mean that he begin to express himself volubly on political matters. On the contrary, the less concern for issues, the better in this early period. First, because it is possible to make very serious errors in judgment on short acquaintance with any political situation. Second, because the American antipolitical tradition tends to make people very suspicious of anyone, particularly a newcomer, who seems to be taking issues seriously.

The process of making a name for oneself is really remarkably simple in most areas. The Parent-Teacher Associations, Junior Chambers of Commerce, and diverse church social groups are excellent vehicles for getting to know and be

known in the neighborhood. There is always a shortage of responsible and intelligent leaders in these organizations. The man or woman who has ideas and the willingness to work at them can become a figure of importance in the average community in six months or less.

It is important to realize at this point, however, that everything cannot be left to chance or providence. One must often be one's own press agent and see that the most favorable light is thrown on his contributions to whatever groups he is serving. Here again the job is fairly easy. In all but the largest cities, newspapers are eager for well-written accounts of local events. (It is amazing to discover with experience how few organizations are able to submit adequate press releases to the paper.) By sending timely accounts of the activities in which one is engaged to a receptive reporter, a good deal of publicity is possible on the basis of a reasonable amount of work and time expended.

If anyone is offended by the suggestion that he publicize himself in this calculating way, he had better give up any idea of becoming effective in politics. God sees what is secret and rewards in secret. Politicians do not have this divine quality about them. Publicity is one of the standards by which they judge the value of any man to their organization. And most of what one reads in the average newspaper has found its way there through just some such personal initiative. It is the height of naïveté to suppose that the press is filled with stories garnered by disinterested reporters on the basis of their objective news value. The truth is that most editors have far too little reporting help to do anything like a full coverage of their community. They depend very heavily on receiving self-serving items from a wide variety of persons—and they are seldom disappointed.

The third step in this process of getting into politics involves making oneself a spokesman for some part of the community on a matter of importance to a considerable

number of people. This is not a contradiction of what was said earlier about avoiding the discussing of *issues*. There is a great difference between generalizations about a variety of abstract or relatively remote general policy concerns and an active interest in the condition of the local street, the decline of the grammar school, or the hit-and-miss quality of garbage collection. These, to the average American, are not "issues"; they are troubles. The man who can help get rid of them is apt to stimulate a good deal of public confidence and enthusiasm.

A word of caution here, however. Frequently a person interested in breaking into politics via this special area of interest approach makes the mistake of trying to work by attacking "politicians" in a rude and irresponsible manner. This will always get the applause of the multitude, and such applause is heady stuff. But this sort of thing creates deep resentments in the very groups with which one hopes to work. It is far more effective, both in terms of the cause for which one is speaking and in terms of the ultimate goal of political participation, to act as an intermediary between discontented neighbors and the men at party headquarters. Doing this need not involve any compromise with principle. It is highly erroneous to suppose that the only way to deal honestly and effectively with a politician is to denounce him to his face in public. My own experience has led me to believe that reasonableness induces responsible reaction in most political leaders.

It is time now to evidence an interest in party activity. This may be done directly by a visit of state on the local chairman. It may be done indirectly by a letter to the press, supporting the party and its position on some critical issue. It may be expressed by registering as a member of the caucus and making a small contribution, or a large one where possible, to the party chest in the next campaign. The important thing is some gesture which indicates clearly that

the individual is ready to put himself and whatever influence he is thought to have at the reasonable disposal of the organization. This can be done in more ways than there is time to list here.

Apprenticeship

In an earlier chapter our discussion of political bosses made reference to one particular man who still does the clerical work of his party in spite of the fact that he is now one of the top leaders in the state. This is a clue to what the newcomer to party work must expect when he actually begins to serve his organization.

The foundation of American political strength is in the neighborhood and in the contact between party personalities and the people up and down the street. This means that the most significant organizational activity is that which builds up and maintains these personal associations and relationships. Far from regarding it as beneath his dignity to pass out handbills, collect absentee ballots, and take aged men and women to clinics and baseball games, the ward worker realizes that this is going to be far more important on Election Day than writing and delivering learned discourses on the tariff. The novice party member who is put to work at some such menial activity need not feel un-used or ill-used. He is engaged in the most important work any politician can do.

The initial excitement of being involved in real politics can give one a feeling of being part of a tightly knit organization, all of whose members are pulling toward the same end. Indeed, most of the public and semiprivate utterances of party leaders are intended to create just such an impression. It would be easy for the newcomer to throw discretion to the winds at this point and take party unity at face value.

This would be a serious mistake. Every political party is composed of various factions. These factions are usually

engaged in a subtle tug of war for control of leadership positions. A great deal of time and energy goes into maneuvering for preferments and advantage. Often the rank and file of the party are unaware of the full implications of the tensions that they see in one form or another. They are literally pawns to be moved to and fro at the service of one clique or another in the leadership eschelons.

The sophisticated party member does not let himself be *used* against his will and better judgment. He may choose to align himself with one of the contending elements. Or he may try to remain above the conflict in order to serve the larger organization, whichever contestant comes out on top. Whatever course he chooses will be chosen with full understanding of what he is doing. He will not become the unwitting tool of any one faction.

It is not an easy thing for anyone to avoid becoming embroiled in the petty leadership and prestige squabbles that fragment political parties. The personality orientation of our politics gives such feuds a far greater importance than their substantial content would warrant. The average politician finds it hard to understand that there are people who care less about *who* runs the party than about *what* the party stands for. The man who insists upon subordinating factional disputes to a program concern will be looked upon as a queer bird indeed.

This is the very point, however, at which the responsible issue-oriented beginner may come into his own and make his first real dent on party character. Although he will seem at first to be a strange or even suspicious phenomenon, he may very well elicit in the long run a kind of trust and respect that the chronic claquer never earns; for one of the perpetual problems of politics is the eventual conciliation of the opposed side in these internecine battles. Quarrels that rage violently between campaigns must either be settled before election or take a heavy toll in lost votes. Frequently the

resolution of the most destructive feuds is brought about by the leadership of the third-force personalities who stand for the centrality of compromise and concerted party effort.

THE PARTY REGULAR

Party work can be an absorbing and demanding activity. Indeed, it often tends to foreclose other interests and consume all the spare time of the one who takes it on. This should not be allowed to happen—not merely for personal reasons, although they are always to be considered, but because complete absorption by routine party responsibilities can be self-defeating. As we have seen earlier, the value of any individual to his political organization is measured in part by the kind of contacts and following he has. These are not merely necessary for original recognition. They will largely determine the degree to which one is able to assert himself effectively on behalf of his convictions throughout his entire political career. The politician who loses touch with the groups from which he has in the past drawn his strength is more than likely to find himself in serious trouble.

Maintaining Contacts

Many prominent national figures have learned the hard way just how important it is to maintain contact at the grass roots. Recent political history is filled with stories of men who neglected to do so, to their lasting regret. As distinguished a senator as the late George Norris was actually defeated by a man considered to be less than a fraction of his stature because Mr. Norris became so involved in Washington that he refused to maintain his state organization. At the other extreme, some of the most disreputable figures to disgrace our Congress owe their political longevity to an obsequious preoccupation with "home folks."

What is true of national politics is true also at the neigh-

borhood level. The natural cynicism of Americans where politicians are concerned makes them quick to detect or imagine slights on the part of those to whom they have given their support. No involvement in the press of party responsibility should be taken as an excuse for neglecting these basic contacts.

Party Discipline

One of the most popular of the American political myths is the assumption that the best candidate for office is the one who can boast of his "independence" of all claims and ties. So intrenched is this notion that a former member of Congress, who later became a state governor, once voted against a particular bill just because he had been subjected to a great deal of pressure to support it. He explained quite candidly to a friend that he had no strong feeling one way or the other about that legislation, but felt that to oppose it in the face of the clamor of powerful groups at home on its behalf would earn him a reputation as an "unbossed," "courageous," and "independent" person. He was quite right. His election to the gubernatorial chair was made possible by the reputation that he had earned in Congress for "integrity."

This kind of thing makes it difficult for many people to understand the place and importance of party discipline in American politics. As a result, the average politician is subjected to a good deal of abuse when he subordinates his own opinion to the demands of a united stand. Such compromise is sneered at as selling out or bowing to the yoke of the machine.

In many instances, of course, individuals and groups do yield on an important point, one far more significant than the objective of party unity. There are a great many times when the individual who wishes to work responsibly within the framework of a party must go along with the organization even though he regards its decision as unwise. This is

necessary because the only alternative is the fragmentation of political life and the elimination of all conscientious men from leadership roles in the major parties.

It is very easy to overdramatize the kinds of concessions that must be made to party discipline. One tends to imagine them in terms of terrible sacrifices of principle. The truth is that they are rarely anything to get exercised about. This is true for two reasons:

First, most such compromises involve personnel rather than policy. One is asked to support for appointive or elective office some man who is less qualified than another. The personality-patronage orientation of our political life rarely lets party leaders get excited enough about issues to crack the whip on them. I have been told again and again by experienced politicians that they have rarely if ever been given instructions on a matter of substance. The party lets them strictly alone except where jobs are concerned.

Second, the differences in qualifications between the party designation and the better possibility are rarely serious enough to warrant a rupture of the united front. The idea, fostered largely by the movies, that political leaders are constantly rejecting clean-cut, idealistic, and intelligent young candidates in favor of corrupt bar-flies is quite unrealistic. Very few of the former really want to serve in underpaid government positions; and the politicians are shrewd enough to know that the latter are a poor investment in public relations. Thus, the choices are for the most part between C plus and B minus, not A and E!

No man has a right to lead who has not learned to follow. This is as true in politics as anywhere else. The necessities of a complicated social and political mechanism call for an organized approach, not the sporadic assaults of Lone Rangers. It is probably accurate and fair to assert that the demands of political party discipline rarely ask anything more in the way of sacrifice of integrity than do the require-

ments for success in business. The Christian will be constantly troubled by the concessions that the presence of other lives and values forces him to make; but he will understand that so long as he chooses to live responsibly in the midst of his fellows, he must make such concessions, always conscious of their threat to his own integrity.

Favor Seekers

A few years ago one of the national magazines carried a fascinating article by a young man who had become active in urban politics. The theme of his remarks was that he had found it almost impossible to avoid corruption at the hands of people who wanted favors done. The whole process, he pointed out, is very subtle. People will offer you bribes to do the things that they have a right to expect you to do. He was approached by many individuals who were anxious to get municipal licenses, to put up overhanging signs, open taverns, operate veterinary hospitals, and so on. In almost every case the man asking for his intercession could have gone to the city hall, made formal application, and obtained his permit without any trouble. When he suggested this simple alternative he was met with knowing glances, cynical winks, and sneers. His petitioners knew better! They were wise to politics! They understood that somebody had to be paid off for everything! For a time the writer of that article held out against taking any fees for his intercession. Eventually, however, he was persuaded by friends and favor seekers that this was an unrealistic position. Finally he found himself tied up tightly in the net of corruption that traps so many naïve officeholders.

Every man who has had any experience in political life knows just how fiendishly subtle the temptation to misuse one's influence can be. It does not come in the form of classical villains in silk hats and cloaks demanding outrageous privileges. More often than not it is garbed in the aura of dull

respectability, replete with church membership and a reputation for civic virtue. What it asks in any specific situation is apt to be very simple and reasonable, even its obvious due. What it offers is seldom so enticing as to arouse suspicion. The worried father wants a word said to the judge before whom his hot-rodding son will be coming up for trial. He does not ask that the boy be let off, but that the hearing be held in private to avoid "harmful publicity." A property owner finds himself stuck with land that cannot be profitably developed under the community's zoning restrictions. All he wants is an exemption from what are surely overly exacting technicalities! A local dairy owner would like the contract to supply milk to school lunchrooms. He cannot quite meet the lowest competing bid. Surely a small enterprise, locally owned, deserves some concessions! And in return these men offer nothing—except the fact that they are all popular members of a number of large fraternal and social organizations.

The person who has grown up thinking of political corruption in terms of huge sums of cash, obviously dangerous men, and diverse nefarious activities is more than likely to be taken off guard by such simple requests. He will be tempted to use his influence in the party to help out these decent people. Often this is just what he should do. But it is important to remember at all times that this kind of thing is of the essence of corruption. The use of one's power, not to remedy inequities but to create new ones, is the real basis of political degradation. It creates the patterns, habits, values, and instinctive responses by which the ground is prepared for more dramatic misconduct. These, rather than day-to-day compromises and accommodations between politicians and factions, are the real bases of political corruption.

"A MAN WHO . . ."

One of the great sources of disappointment for many politically enterprising young people is the discovery of just how few politicians can ever become candidates for office themselves. In every community in the country there are able and ambitious men and women who have spent years working within a party without ever achieving nomination for office of any kind.

"Available" Candidates

This condition cannot be attributed simply to the low ratio of jobs to politicians; for many of those most consistently passed over have qualifications that are far more impressive than the men selected. The answer lies in the fact that a slate of candidates is expected to represent more than merely a collection of able men, if, indeed, it is expected to be that at all! Candidates for office must meet many tests that are only indirectly related to their potential effectiveness as public servants. They must be from the proper ethnic and religious background, claim membership in strategically balanced social groups, originate in the tactically correct section of town, and fulfill many other criteria that are highly valued by the canons of American politics.

Thus, the opportunity of a given individual for nomination to office depends less on his talent and strength within the party than on his ability to show that he supplies something that the ticket will otherwise lack in voter-group appeal.

This has tended to be the pattern in the past; but there is no reason to suppose that it must go on forever. The very fluidity of population that has characterized this nation since World War I and become so much more dramatic in recent years is breaking down many of the ethnic group loyalties that were once so crucial. Improved transportation facilities

and media of communication are dissolving the introversion tendencies of communities and making neighborhood ties less powerful. The American public is taking on more and more of a uniform appearance and taste.

This being true, there is every reason to expect that with the passage of time political leadership will begin to realize that many of the traditional canons of candidate selection can be radically revised or completely discarded. The dramatization of this possibility might well constitute one of the principal aims of the younger political generation. Such a change in orientation would mean more than widening the base of available candidates. It would also remove one of the major obstacles to public concern with substantial issues.

Shall I Run?

Those who are active in one of the major parties and possess the qualifications that we have discussed above will eventually have to decide whether to accept nomination themselves. For some this will be an easy decision. The prospect will be so appealing or so appalling that no indecision arises. For others the answer will come only after a great deal of sleepless pondering.

Obviously there are no generalizations to be made here that will settle the matter one way or the other. A great many variables are involved that make such suggestions impossible. Personality factors, family status, financial capacity, the temperament of one's wife, the impact of the campaign on one's job—all these factors and many more must be taken into consideration. The decision is never easy. Men who were in every other way excellent risks have had to refuse because of the limitations of health. Others, as strong as work horses, have found that their wives could not face the endless handshaking and reception lines that every good candidate's mate must endure. The cost of a campaign often casts the deciding vote. The thought of what will happen to his relations with

customers or employers has made many a good man quail. All of these are valid reasons for deciding one way or the other. They need no further elaboration here.

There is, however, a further consideration that is too often overlooked in the excitement of being offered a place on the ticket. Is this a job that will give one an opportunity to prove himself and continue to advance within the party?

It is not at all uncommon for political leaders to sacrifice some man in a position that is either unsuited to his talents or a complete dead end. This is sometimes done regardless of these consequences. It is sometimes done deliberately *because* of them. Many a troublesome citizen has been taken off the backs of party leaders by election to a completely meaningless or inevitably unpopular spot. I have seen this happen in various situations. A friend of mine who was making a nuisance of himself on policy questions within his party was nominated and elected to a place on the Public Safety Commission. Since this body is supposed to operate in a nonpartisan fashion, he was effectively removed from his previously critical role in organization councils. Men have been effectively disposed of by being given seats on boards of education, police personnel bodies, and technical planning committees in whose work there is relatively little public interest.

Service in such positions must frequently be accepted because there is a job to be done and the individual involved has the ability to do it. It is not suggested that responsibility ought to be shaken off under those circumstances purely out of concern for the political future. However, one will be well advised to be sure that this is the case and not let himself be forced into a dead end by those who are anxious to see him removed from active politics—or by his own excitement at the prospect of being a candidate.

CRISPIN CRISPIAN!

It was first Tuesday in November. Election Day. *Five-thirty* in the morning.

I drove through the quiet streets of the still sleeping town, across the tracks to the crowded tenements and flyblown store fronts of what we shall call the Fiftieth Ward. A few people were hurrying along the sidewalks now and stamping their cold feet as they waited on chilly corners for buses. This was the part of town where men started work at six and seven o'clock—and would not take the trouble to vote unless carried by car to and from the polls.

When I parked in front of the Polish Eagles Club there was a dim light shining through the steamy windows and two cars standing at the curb, their idling motors sending out little puffs of vapor. There should have been many more. If the people of this area were to be voted in any numbers we should need at least eight or ten, preferably a dozen automobiles and drivers.

Inside the club, huddled near a wood-burning stove, were three people. The chairman of Ward Fifty, his brother-in-law, and a student of mine, whom we will call Bill Sanders. Bill had come to me a day or two before and said that he wanted to help on Election Day. He figured that he could give about two hours. When would he be most needed? From six to eight, I had said. And Bill was waiting when I arrived.

The chairman looked embarrassed about our small group and muttered something about the people who would be along in a few minutes. We took our address cards and started out. For two frantic hours Bill, the brother-in-law, and I shuttled back and forth carting workmen, aged ladies, and downy youths to the disgraceful old schoolhouse where the balloting was being done. Gradually we were joined by a few more party stalwarts. They made cursory apologies for

being late and spent the bulk of their time setting up a percolator in the back room of the club. We could have used them better on the streets, but the hot coffee did smell good when it finally started to bubble at eight-thirty.

I was surprised to see Sanders there when I stopped by for some new cards and a doughnut at nine. He was to have quit at eight. But he backed up against the smoky stove and said he figured to spend another hour and then leave. At eleven he was still there. It was getting on toward the lunch-hour rush, he explained. He would help out through noon and then take off. At three he was gently escorting a deaf-and-dumb couple into the polls and holding up two fingers to show them which lever to pull just as they went through the school basement door. It was barely seventy-five feet from the machines! Luckily the opposition watchers were looking the other way.

I got caught in the four to six press and did not get back to the Polish Eagles Club until shortly after the polls had closed. There was Bill Sanders sitting near the stove, drinking coffee out of a cracked mug. (The paper cups had given out about two o'clock.) He looked somewhat abashed to see me and explained elaborately that there would have been no point in rushing back to the library for two miserable hours at the tag end of the day.

When the votes were all counted, our party had won the election. It was an astounding reversal of every poll and prediction, and analysts tried to account for it in various ways. Some explained it in terms of economic factors. Others professed to find the answer in public reaction to the personalities of leading candidates. A few spoke darkly of secret deals and a stab in the back. Probably all of these suggestions contained an element of truth.

There was another factor, too. One that is difficult to label. I find it simplest to think of it in terms of Bill Sanders, many miles from home in more ways than one, straddling a chair in the back room of the Polish Eagles Club, drinking coffee

from a cracked mug and deciding to work "just one more hour" in the Fiftieth Ward. And I like to remember, too, the words of Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth which seem so appropriate:

> *And gentlemen in England now abed*
> *Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,*
> *And hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks*
> *That fought with us upon St. Crispin's Day.*

Politics is a wonderfully exciting business!

Chapter 8

Independent Politics

In an earlier chapter a number of critical things were said about the average American's assumption that all right-thinking people ought to remain politically "independent," refusing to affiliate themselves with one of the major parties. All that was said then still obtains. The moralistic feeling that there is something wrong with political parties and something inherently more "Christian" in being uncommitted has no justification in theory or experience. The notion that one can express his moral concerns only by dramatic protest against traditional forms of political organization is one of the more unfortunate results of our denial of the reality of social structures. More often than not the rejection of party responsibility is unworthy of the high motives to which it is dishonestly attributed.

As a tactic, rather than as an absolute moral principle, however, there is much to be said for political independence under some circumstances. When one refrains from identifying himself with one of the major parties because he feels that it is possible to work more effectively for specific objectives outside them, he is remaining independent not as a means of keeping himself unsullied by the demands of party membership but as a method of achieving ultimately more

significant involvement in the political life of the community. This is a thoroughly defensible position and one that has been taken by many earnestly concerned and realistic Christians.

PREREQUISITES TO INDEPENDENT ACTION

It is not an easy matter to outline the circumstances under which independence constitutes the most effective political tactic. The decision must be made in particular cases on the basis of local conditions, personality resources, and the objectives that seem most important at the time. But there are some generalizations that may be helpful in making such decisions in specific situations:

First, independent political action must eventually accomplish one of two things, either the conversion or coercion of one of the regular parties or a part of its members *or* the establishment of a new political party.

This is true because ours is not a direct democracy. Decisions are not made by counting noses or recording the volume of complaints on any particular issue. They are made by elected representatives, and these elected representatives are put in office by a process in which party organizations play highly important roles. Unless the independent voter means to run a slate of his own, he must manage to impose his program on one of the two principal machines by which the functions of government are borne.

Failure to understand this simple fact has led to the disillusionment of many would-be political reformers. Over and over again some high-spirited independent group sets out to change conditions in a community and begins with loud blasts against the existing political parties. It signs up indignant citizens, holds noisy protest rallies, and solicits newspaper editorials praising its aims and deploring the evil machinations of the bosses. For a while everything looks hopeful. At last the parties are going to be put in their places.

Then, to the horror of honest citizens, one of two things occurs. The independent group decides to run its leaders for office or it "makes a deal" to support one of the very parties that it has been denouncing! In the first instance the chagrin of the nonpolitical voter is great because he feels that his independent movement has been turned into a vehicle for the personal advancement of a few men. If the latter course is followed, the disillusionment arises from a sense of having been "sold out." Somehow, our naïve citizen supposes, it should have been possible to keep the reform movement completely out of politics. How this completely nonpolitical group should have made its will effective is something that he does not feel capable of deciding.

Astute politicians are well aware of this dilemma of the independent groups. They know that such organizations are going to have to come to terms with the political facts of life at some time or other. They are also familiar with the disgust that members of such movements are apt to feel the moment their leaders stop making abstract statements about civic virtue and begin to implement a program of action. I have been told by cynical old "pols" that you can stop any reform group by slinging a little mud, by accusing its organizers of being personally ambitious for office, and by yelling "deal" when the time comes for a decision to support the opposing party or a specific group of candidates. The "nice" nonpolitical people who make up such movements just cannot stand having their high-mindedness questioned. They are apt to blame their leaders for having betrayed them and to withdraw from further support of the organization.

Second, independent political action assumes the existence of a large group of interested but uncommitted citizens. Since it is necessary to influence the acts and aims of existing parties, there must be something to offer in return for the concessions that are being asked. Notice that there are two quali-

fying adjectives used in that first sentence, "interested but uncommitted."

Third, it is almost impossible for independent action to succeed unless it has the support or recognition of the local press. The reasons for saying this should be fairly obvious. Regular political parties do not always need publicity; often they thrive on the lack of it. Little publicity means a minimum of voter interest in politics. And this in turn usually assures a small election easily controlled by the hard core of the faithful. In the absence of sustained publicity, politicians can fight the way they most like to fight—on the basis of patronage, favors, and personal relationships.

An independent organization or group, however, depends for its success on arousing the interest and organizing the indignation of the nonpolitical elements in the community. While this can be done by handbills and door-to-door visits, these devices are much more difficult, expensive, and subject to suspicion than newspaper stories and editorials. Many good citizens will have nothing to do with a movement that has not been baptized by liberal doses of printer's ink. They look upon it as being either irresponsible or downright dangerous. They confuse the inability to get attention with the unwillingness to state its aims in frank and open terms.

Fourth, one of the basic prerequisites to successful independent political action is the existence of issues which can be given a nonpartisan and non-ideological orientation. School improvement, the elimination of administrative corruption, zoning codes, and matters of this sort can often be effectively approached on such a basis. But questions such as labor legislation, pure food and drug ordinances, welfare and relief programs, and things of that sort have tended to become so identified with partisan positions and ideological patterns that it is very difficult to raise them out of this context in particular communities.

In the state of Rhode Island, for example, there flourished

at one time an organization known as the Consumers' League. Under vigorous leadership this movement accomplished a great deal in the field of labor legislation, pure food laws, and so forth. People of diverse political backgrounds took part in it. Republicans pressed with Democrats for better hours for workers and cleaner conditions in dairies. Together they saw one campaign after another succeed beyond any reasonable hope.

But in the 1930's the climate of the nation, and with it Rhode Island, changed. Under the New Deal many of the issues on which the Consumers' League had worked effectively were made parts of a total social program that was defined in terms of party lines. Now Republican women who had supported the group when it fought for child labor laws discovered that such things were "Democratic" or "New Dealish" or "Socialistic." Their enthusiasm waned. The result was the general deterioration of the organization and its eventual dissolution.

Independent political action assumes the existence of issues that have not been co-opted by either of the major parties or by any ideological faction in the national community.

Fifth, a vigorous independent movement demands an adequate supply of leaders with some experience in and feeling for the political process. The job of steering a middle course between the precincts of the regular political organizations is extremely difficult. This is particularly true in view of the latter's eagerness to help the independent make a fool of himself. A few ill-considered press statements, blunders in approaching government officials, breaches of impartiality in dealing with party leaders, and scores of other traps wait for the inexperienced group that sets out to influence the politics of the town.

One such group destroyed itself in the first week of its existence by the mistake of accepting a "kind offer from the Republican party" to use its mimeographing machine. An-

other had its meetings in a labor union hall and lost half of its potential members that way. A third invited the local Unitarian minister to be chairman and found an amazing reluctance on the part of Roman Catholic neighbors to join up. A fourth was ruined by the unwillingness of one of its committee chairmen to check the facts about town government and the laws under which it operated before making charges and proposals.

The independent political association is the target of vicious attacks by all regular party factions. It needs leadership of the most intelligent and experienced sort if it is to succeed.

Finally, independent political action assumes the existence of real competition between the two major parties. Where there is a permanent or even passing agreement between the major parties on the limitation of issues, independent action is made extremely difficult. There are communities in which the regular party organizations conspire to negate the impact of nonpartisan groups. They may receive the delegations and suggestions of these movements courteously enough and simply ignore all that they ask. Or they may refuse to have anything to do with what one boss called "them damned amateurs."

This kind of situation is not as common as one might suppose. Just as business enterprises combine to control prices and production upon occasion, so do political organizations. Regular politicians see in amateur groups threats to their whole way of doing business. Such organizations represent the ascendancy of issues over personalities, which the old-line party leaders fear more than anything else. Thus, independent groups are often rendered impotent by the refusal of the major parties to compete for their endorsement. Under such circumstances, they have no recourse other than to enter their own ticket in elections and become a third party.

Suggesting some of the basic conditions upon which inde-

pendent political action depends is not meant to deny the possibility of success where they are not all present. Obviously, factors of personality, public indignation, the health or senility of existing party organizations, regional traditions, and a host of other considerations can create unique situations to which no general rules can be applied. While the aggressive independent need not be discouraged from launching his organization in the absence of some of the elements suggested, he ought to know why in his case the missing factor is expendable.

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION

Let us turn now to a consideration of the principles governing the building of a successful independent political action group.

Paralleling Structures of Government

In Chapter 2 an incident was cited in which a delegation of young people from a university political organization sought to exert pressure on a state legislator who represented a district in which none of them lived. College students are not the only ones who fall victim to the assumption that politicians are moved by rational appeals or general threats emanating from people who have no hold over them. More often than not, independent political groups make this same mistake. They are recruited from the ranks of all those in the general vicinity who have an interest in the objectives sought, without regard to the lines of the election districts and party provinces involved.

One of the first principles of successful political action is recognition of the fact that politicians are more apt to be influenced by an angry housewife from their own bailiwick than by a host of angels from the next town. Thus the effective establishment of an independent group depends upon

organizing along lines closely parallel to those which parties recognize and by which they are themselves governed. No matter how tempting it may be to accumulate members without regard to the apparently arbitrary divisions of wards, precincts, and counties, the wise organizer will insist upon voting areas as the basis of his group's structure. Anything else is nothing more than a propaganda or educational association.

Representative Base of Membership

It is said that when two laborers were elected to the vestry of a large Episcopal church in New York, a distinguished financier who was also a vestryman expressed personal dissatisfaction with their selection. He had always hoped, he said, that the vestry would consist of the kind of gentlemen that he could invite to meet in his library!

Such an attitude shocks us when applied directly to the affairs of the church. But it is not at all uncommon in political action groups. The words, "the sort of people who could meet in my living room," have been used more than once in discussing the make-up of a community independent organization.

The temptation here is not difficult to understand. Most of us see the community through the eyes of our activities and friendships. We come to think of certain types of individuals and particular people as representative of the best and most responsible thought. Thus when the time comes to organize anything from a bridge game to a reform drive, we are likely to think first, and often last, of the old familiar faces.

It is not an easy thing to approach persons and groups with whom we have had little or no contact, particularly with a proposition that requires a good deal of trust among the personnel. Nevertheless, it is a necessity in political action. Geographic spread, social group representation, religious variety, and political sympathy are all considerations that should guide the invitations to participation. Only by acquir-

ing a representative membership base can any such group claim to be truly a spokesman for the whole community.

Sound Publicity and Public Relations

It has been suggested earlier that one of the most effective devices by which political parties combat independent action in their communities is misrepresentation of the motives and activities of the new group and its leadership. One who has had no experience in this area will find it hard to appreciate how true this is. The public is particularly receptive to such calumny, partly because of its cynical suspicion of all political activity and partly because of a resentment against what seems to be in many cases a self-appointed custodian of public morals.

Thus, well-planned press and public relations are of the utmost importance. The community must be apprised of the nature and purposes of the new organization in such a way as to minimize opportunity for misunderstanding. This does not take a staff of experts. It does take a sense of the mood of the public and some imagination.

Often this aspect of the whole business can be handled in close conjunction with the editors or reporters for the local press. In many towns newspaper publishers have served as enthusiastic consultants to civic groups, assisting them in every way to make the best case for themselves in the eyes of the public. But this responsibility, whether turned over to an experienced reporter or handled by an amateur, must never be carelessly borne. It can make or break the group.

Careful Timing

The fatal weakness of many efforts at independent political action is a hasty birth precipitated by some crisis or scandal in the community. While many organizations that have been generated spontaneously by public indignation or fear turn

in an excellent job on a single issue or election, a far larger number of those that are badly timed fail completely.

There are two kinds of mistake in timing that can seriously injure the chances of any political action program:

First, mistakes vis-à-vis recruiting possibilities—efforts to organize independent political action in the week following the Community Chest drive when every civic leader is exhausted from doorbell ringing, in the middle of June when everything is slowing down for the summer, and two weeks after a disastrously bad election when no effective action is possible for another four years, and so on. The list of timing mistakes of this sort is endless. People must be caught at a time when their energies and enthusiasms coincide with the opportunity to act promptly in some satisfying way.

Second, many errors are made relative to issues.

In a small New England town a group of citizens had become disgusted with the way in which the public schools were being treated. Budgets had been cut, teachers overloaded, and buildings allowed to run down badly. Nothing in the way of organization had been undertaken, however, until word went out that the Board of Education was going to require a loyalty oath of all school personnel.

Outraged, the people who had only been muttering up to that time went into action. They formed a committee intended to stir up public interest in the whole education problem. *But* they chose the loyalty oath as the immediate issue. The result? They were denounced loudly as "Red-lovers," lost all chance to do anything constructive, and soon thereafter broke up.

This was terrible timing. We may admire the spunk of such people but we cannot approve their judgment. If they had been concerned chiefly with a loyalty oath, they had every right to organize when they did. But to let themselves get out on that frail limb in their first public appearance, when their

real concern was much broader, was a bad mistake in timing!

Any group that wants to make its voice heard and listened to with respect must introduce itself to the community at the most propitious time possible. This may be in the days leading up to an election when it can pose pertinent questions to the candidates of all parties. It may be when some popular clamor needs a coherent spokesman. Or it may come at a time of apparent political calm when the new group can introduce itself by interesting but non-inflammatory inquiries into the operation of local governmental units.

The important thing is to select a moment, figuratively speaking, when the possibilities of being accused of special pleading or ulterior motives are at a minimum.

Strong Planning Core

It is almost inevitable with independent political groups that their leaders be disciples of the democratic method carried to fearful extremes. A desire to avoid the very sort of boss rule that they are trying to fight in the major parties often misleads reform movements into an effort to operate in completely undisciplined fashion. Meetings are disorganized and much too long. Members get a feeling of going nowhere in particular. Conflicting and overlapping assignments sap the time and energy of all concerned.

This is no place for a discussion of how to conduct a good meeting. But it can be said that anarchy is not the answer! No matter how intelligent its membership, a group operates with greater over-all effectiveness, creativity, and ultimate democracy when its work is laid out by careful advance planning. This need not foreclose vigorous debate of policy decision. It can actually make such debate more helpful. And far from seeming to discourage democratic participation, it can guarantee a maximum amount of it by assuring members of the most reasonable use of their time.

Democracy does not work by insisting that disorganized masses generate detailed programs. It operates, rather, by putting responsibility in the hands of the most able and giving the total group the right of acceptance, amendment, or rejection.

There are a great many more things that could be said about the problems and techniques of independent political organization, but there is no room to go into them all. Let us close this section, therefore, with a few caveats:

1. Prominent names are necessary for window dressing. It is unwise, however, to expect much routine work from people who have their fingers in a dozen different pies. The people that you are told "you must get" are probably the ones on whom you will be able to count the least. Although they may have been dependable work horses at one time, many of them will feel that they have served their apprenticeship and are ready for advancement to the letterhead of some dignified organization. Look for the young men and women with more zeal and time than fame.

2. Politicians will not hesitate to use independent groups as the means with which to whip their opposition. Frequently "sincere" members of one of the major parties will offer your organization "the real low-down on the other party." Listen to such information, but be very careful about believing or acting on any of it.

3. There is always a tendency on the part of independents to denounce "politicians." Often this is justified and necessary. Sometimes it represents nothing more than a feeling that reformers are supposed to act this way—at least they do in the movies. Very frequently the politicians that we condemn out of hand are giving us poor government because we do not deserve anything better! A little reasonableness in speaking to and about the leaders of the major parties may pay off in many surprisingly helpful ways.

4. Real grass-roots political action does not have to cost a lot of money. Anything that necessitates large expenditures should be examined with great care and some suspicion. Far too often, spending money is an easy substitute for doorbell ringing, letter writing, and buttonholing. Five young men nearly succeeded in overthrowing the Democratic machine in a large eastern city. They worked at it for a year and a half. They spent endless hours in personal visits and organizational work. But their major expense was for postage stamps, bus fares, and typewriter ribbons. Beware the glossy pamphlet, mass meeting, and big-name banquet. These are useful devices at times—but only at times. It is a serious mistake to spend time and effort raising money that could more profitably go into shaking hands and listening to complaints! You are after votes, not prestige.

Two last words. First, independents are often dismayed by the tendency of their associates to use the publicity that they get through nonpartisan action as a springboard into politics. If there is reason to suppose that such a one joined the group for that end or that he misused his position to the group's detriment, this is reprehensible. A sharp eye should be kept out for such opportunists.

Frequently, honest men and women become involved in independent activity because they have been unable to find an effective means of breaking into party organizations or have been unwilling to align themselves with existing factions in control. If a change of circumstances makes party membership appear more feasible and more desirable, this should not be held against the individual involved. Indeed, sometimes the only real benefit to the community from a reform movement is to be found in its tendency to encourage political activity, which often ends in the acceptance of serious party responsibility.

Second, with the passage of time and as the result of an

active program, an independent group will almost inevitably find itself more and more identified with one of the major political factions.

Theoretically this should not be true. The independent organization is supposed to pick and choose candidates for its support on the basis of their fitness and without regard for party label; and so far as possible this is what it does. However, one seldom finds that the issues and candidates fall in such a way that this works out well in practice. Parties tend toward a certain consistency in the quality of the men they pick. Often an independent group finds that it is compelled to back the same party several elections running, and support almost its entire ticket.

The same thing is apt to be true on particular issues. Either the Republicans or Democrats may assert vigorous leadership on behalf of schools, charter reform, and such causes with the kind of consistency that brings the independent organization into its camp time after time. When this happens, the result is very deep resentment in the opposition camp and a public tendency to decide cynically that the reformers have sold out.

There is not much that can be done about this situation. The life of an independent political action group, at least its effective period, is limited. The best policy is to recognize this from the start, do what can be done as expeditiously as possible, and then close up shop before the energies, enthusiasm, and self-confidence of the members have been exhausted. It is as important to know when to end such a venture as it is to know when to begin it. A group that winds up its undertakings voluntarily before it has obviously been forced to do so leaves its members' reputations untarnished against the day of the next rally.

Chapter 9

Some Current Local Issues

In the midst of the Republican National Convention in 1948 a leading member of the steering committee, a man of great influence, was interviewed by a radio commentator. In the course of their conversation the commentator asked how his guest had managed to become a person of such importance in his party. The latter laughed and replied:

"Well, it will probably seem rather silly, but the truth is that it started quite by accident. You see, the sidewalk in front of my house at home was broken by frost action one winter. A jagged piece of cement stuck up in such a way as to trip people who passed by. Of course, I was not legally liable for that condition. But it bothered me to have it there, so I asked the city department of public works to do something about it. They promised everything and did nothing. After a bit I complained to the mayor. He passed the buck to the city council. Finally I went to the chairman of the Republican party and demanded action. . . . By the time I got him to promise some help I was up to my neck in politics."

This story is unusual only in being told so frankly by the person involved. It is not at all uncommon for American political leaders to rise to positions of great power in their parties not on the basis of a consuming interest in major

issues but as the result of an effort to accomplish some relatively minor objective. Because of the grass-roots orientation of our party structure, the man who gets excited about what is happening in his front yard generates influence among his neighbors—and this becomes the basis on which he rises quickly to national prominence.

This is one of the lessons that the newcomer to politics must learn. Almost by definition the man or woman who is concerned about his Christian responsibility in the political arena is preoccupied with national and international affairs. Tariff reforms, race relations, foreign policy, and related matters tend to loom large in the forefront of his mind. He is interested in peace, brotherhood, security, and the things that will bring these to pass.

At the same time, as we have seen, the basis of political strength is in the neighborhood. And the man who gets to make decisions about major issues is the one who has learned how to cope effectively with the local problems that trouble the man in the street. It will pay us, therefore, to look for a few minutes at the kinds of community issues that make up the substance of grass-roots politics in our own time.

SCHOOLS

One of the major issues at the neighborhood level of politics is that of education. For many years school building facilities and teachers' salaries have been falling behind the needs of the population and competition from other lines of employment. Teachers' colleges cannot turn out enough young people to fill the vacancies that occur every year in present teaching staffs, much less enough personnel to man the new plants that are building or projected. The rapid shift of population centers has left some school districts with empty buildings and others housing children in tents. In some communities every imaginable kind of teaching aid is avail-

able—sound pictures, tutorial programs, field trips, and so on; in neighboring areas even the use of paper is closely rationed.

Obviously the basic problem is financial, but this is by no means the whole story. Neighborhoods are constantly being split wide open over differences in educational policy. In one town, for example, a major political issue for over four years was the relative merits of a junior high school versus the more traditional eight grades and four-year high school arrangement. People took sides in this battle and became more embittered about the question than they ever did over more substantial policy decisions. Leading citizens came to be identified as junior high supporters or anti-junior high. And politicians were expected to draw lines and take stands on this matter.

The same thing happens in other communities with reference to progressive and traditional methods of teaching. Recent assaults on modern techniques of instruction in reading are simply more dramatic manifestations of a struggle that has been going on in substantially the same form in school districts all over the country. Vocational training, college preparatory orientation, the cost of domestic arts programs, and a great many other such matters have created intense and politically significant bitterness in many areas.

In some parts of the United States the conflict of interest between public and parochial education has also created serious political issues. Wherever a substantial portion of the population is supporting parochial school facilities there is a natural temptation for that group to resist the expense of an expanding public educational program. This battle is seldom brought out into the open, since it involves delicate religious questions, but in many towns it rages fiercely behind the scenes and explains much that would otherwise make no sense in the political patterns of the community.

ZONING

With the rapid development of mass-production home construction in America, the establishment of building codes and residential zoning regulations has become an important grass-roots political issue. In scores of towns all over the country, contractors with bulldozers, cement mixers, and pre-cut materials have converted open fields and woodlands into sardine-packed suburban communities. Many areas were caught completely off guard by these invasions. They had no restrictions on lot size, construction materials, or sanitation facilities. Hundreds of homes were put up without sewer lines on hard clay earth that allowed no seepage for septic tanks. Thousands of people were crowded into converted pastures and then given no roads on which to drive to the highways once the spring thaws had set in. Houses were jerry-built of green wood in swampy land and began to disintegrate during the second year of occupancy.

One is apt to be struck by the implications of this sort of thing for the families immediately involved. It is easy to overlook what it has meant to the municipalities and counties in which this has occurred. Scores of small towns have found themselves facing impossible sanitation problems arising from a lack of sewer facilities to accommodate new developments. These same towns have been forced to rebuild roads that were thrown down without proper foundations. At the same time their schools have been flooded by the young families that usually abound in such housing projects. Their police and fire departments have had to be doubled or tripled in order to provide adequate service.

All of this, of course, has been in addition to the more obvious community deterioration arising from the inundation of pleasant semi-rural and residential areas by large numbers of cheap houses. Families that have saved for years to afford

the kind of quiet suburban life that is the dream of so many Americans have suddenly found their neighborhood turned into a treeless, crowded shantytown. Their children are forced into double sessions in schools, their streets break down under a kind of use for which they were never intended, and their other public services suffer an equivalent decline.

One of the first problems that arises in such situations is the deep resentment that the older residents are likely to feel toward their new neighbors. I know of several towns in which the present political alignment is based almost entirely on this chasm between old-timers and newcomers. Politicians have been quick to exploit hard feelings in many areas and have intensified the whole problem greatly.

The response of most towns to these conditions has been to lock the stable door too late. Zoning codes covering all parts of the community are being set up everywhere. Lot sizes are made large enough to prevent further mass developments. Specifications as to road construction and sanitation facilities are included. A few hardy towns have even tried to force building contractors to erect schools as the price of permits to develop lands presently owned by them. All of this does nothing to remedy existing conditions, but it is the only recourse open to afflicted communities.

It is not difficult to imagine the kinds of political pressures that build up in the course of a zoning-code formulation. Property owners who live adjacent to their holdings want very high standards for their area. Those who are remote from their investment are apt to favor greater flexibility, with a view to subsequent sales. Businessmen are eager to have choice locations opened for commercial use. Existing store owners lobby to prevent the occupancy of nearby land by a possible competitor. Churches insist that their neighborhoods must be kept clear of taverns. There is much pulling and hauling of the line dividing farm land from suburban residential. Where can pigs and chickens be kept? What will hap-

pen to my proposed icehouse? Will my mother-in-law be allowed to live in a garage that I am making over for her? Myriad questions of this sort are raised. Every one of them represents a pressure exerted in political terms.

The student of American politics will do well to remember that what a politician promises about a substandard dwelling next door means more to the average citizen than what that same politician does about a substandard nation in Europe!

BLIGHTED URBAN AREAS

In every city of any size there are large areas that have ceased to serve any useful purpose, either commercial or residential. The sad fact is that such sore spots are usually so located that they would make ideal land for either apartment houses or business enterprises. For the most part they are near the center of the city and immediately adjacent to main arteries of transportation. The warehouses, tenements, and condemned structures that now occupy the land are virtually worthless. But—and here is the problem—in order to make any part of such an area useful, the whole of it would have to be redeveloped. No one will put a new apartment house next to a deserted loft. No businessman will open a store in the midst of a huddle of tenements. The entire slum must be swept clean and a new start made from scratch.

Unfortunately this usually means the kind of money that private investors cannot raise and are not willing to risk even if they have it on hand. As a result, the blighted neighborhood lies like some festering sore on the face of the city, slowly spreading to include more and more blocks and buildings.

Movements are on foot all over the nation to do something about this problem. Municipalities, state governments, and federal agencies have set out to find some means of salvaging the valuable locations that are presently rendered so useless. This flurry of activity reflects the increasing significance of

the problem. More and more cities are finding that business is relocating in suburbs, that terrible centers of vice and crime are flourishing in the dead sections in their midst, and that tax values are suffering seriously from the presence of blighted areas. Concerted efforts are being made to find resources for a large-scale attack on this problem.

Here, again, it should not be difficult to see the political ramifications. The presence of blighted areas is itself a matter of concern to municipal authorities. The movement toward redevelopment will mean staggering burdens for presently overtasked government facilities. Land must be appraised, condemned, and purchased. Buildings will have to be torn down. Plans made to use the land most effectively. Contracts let for reconstruction. Once the operations have begun, there will be much pushing and pleading for favorite sites and special opportunities. The possibilities for corruption in such projects stagger the imagination. Here is a subject for real concern on the part of politically conscious Christians.

TRAFFIC

It may seem a bit strange to suggest the traffic problem as one that has serious political implications, but it definitely has in many large cities. Communication lines are the arteries of social and economic life. Anything that blocks them strikes at the health of the community. Whatever helps to free them contributes to social vitality and growth.

In a number of our urban centers the congestion of streets is becoming a serious threat to the very existence of the community. A number of social analysts have predicted that the problem of traffic will eventually bring about the disintegration of city life far more effectively than the fear of atom bombs. Anyone who has ever tried to cross Manhattan Island or the Loop in Chicago at the rush hour will understand just what such commentators mean. But the problem is not one

that can be ignored until it solves itself. Businessmen find that their trade is falling off as customers shrink from driving to the center of town. Fire engines and ambulances often get stuck in clusters of automobiles while houses burn and patients die. Travelers make wide arcs to avoid passing through Megalopolis. Streets need repairing more and more frequently.

Fortunately or unfortunately, mayors and city councils cannot sit idly by and wait for the eventual flight to the country. They are constantly subject to demands for action by the harassed driver, the suffering merchant, and the shrinking tax base. In more than one city an election has been won or lost on the basis of promises and proposals for the alleviation of traffic congestion. Like most of the other ills to which flesh is heir, this issue has become the stuff of which political crises are made.

TAXATION

Most of the current local problems that we have discussed so far relate dramatically to taxation. School buildings, urban redevelopment, and overhead throughways all cost money and reflect their urgency in financial as well as other terms. But taxation is not for the modern community merely an indirect issue. It hits with an impact of its own as well as through the force of these related matters.

In the course of the past twenty years, prices on everything have risen rapidly. Food, housing, and clothes all cost nearly twice what they did in 1935. The average man has enjoyed equivalent rises in pay and is not badly off in spite of the inflationary trend. He earns more and pays more, and generally understands the relationship between the two.

Where the costs of local government are concerned, the story is somewhat different. Even otherwise reasonable men and women seem to feel that streets can be built and repaired,

sewers laid, and schools operated for sums only slightly higher than those expended on these same items in 1930. It is not at all unusual to have some proposed expenditure questioned violently by a man who waves the budget for ten years earlier in proof positive that the current figure is grossly padded.

The result of this attitude has been to put public officials in an impossible position. At the state and federal level the problem is somewhat lessened by the power of these governments to levy indirect taxes. What the taxpayer does not know he is paying never seems to hurt him very much. But municipalities must rely almost entirely on the direct property tax. They are forced to extract in the most painful way the money they need. Consequently they are the targets of continual abuse.

The temptation, therefore, at election time to make the most of these fiscal embarrassments is often too great for the "out" party to resist. Fantastic charges are made, followed up by even more absurd promises. These in turn goad the "ins" to reply in kind, and the battle of distortion is on. Taxpayers, hearing the irresponsible claims made by both sides, are persuaded that local government need cost no more than it did twenty years ago—and the vicious circle is completed.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

At one time juvenile delinquency meant merely minor violations of the prevailing moral code by maladjusted youngsters. That is no longer the case today. In large cities and small towns alike, groups of teen-agers have been giving new and vicious content to the words. Old men have been kicked to death on downtown streets for "the thrill of it"; women and girls are in danger of insult or assault if they so much as venture out of doors after dark in many communities; and car theft, dope addiction, and extortion have been

introduced into previously stable neighborhoods by boys and girls still in high school.

Without digging into the cause of these conditions here, it is pursuant to our present theme to point out that the problems of delinquency have come to be political issues in an increasing number of towns. Politicians are able to garner publicity by talking to civic groups about wayward youth. Crackdowns on teen-age drug store gangs are easily managed and good for headlines. Ambitious officials are able to posture severely as they denounce youthful offenders and promise vigorous enforcement of the law. Juvenile delinquents are easy marks for police crusades. They have little or no political power.

It is all well and good to attribute this problem to parental failure and urge its solution in the home. But the kinds of homes that produce delinquents are seldom equipped to reverse the process effectively. There will continue to be demands for political solutions to the patterns of youthful violence and immorality. No one who professes a concern for responsible politics can afford to ignore the increasing significance of juvenile delinquency in this realm.

There are, of course, many more local issues of critical importance to rural areas, towns, and cities all over the United States. It has not been the purpose of this chapter to list them all or to discuss those named in any detail. Nor shall we take time now to suggest the attitude that the politically responsible Christian ought to adopt toward the ones that have been described. So much depends on particular circumstances that generalizations on the subject would be worse than useless. Earnest study and creative imagination are needed in approaching all local problems. The function of this chapter has been not to elaborate on local issues as such but to suggest the kinds of problems in terms of which grass-roots political decisions are being made. For it is on

the basis of these issues that leaders are chosen who then select personnel and policy for the conduct of national and international affairs.

This one thing may be said in concluding the present discussion. The average American tends to dispose of most local problems by blaming them on politicians. He feels sure that tax rates can be maintained at the 1930 level, present school facilities made to suffice for future needs, streets constructed so that they need never be repaired, and zoning laws established that will let him do what he chooses and keep his neighbors from doing what he dislikes—*if only the right men are elected to office*! "The politicians"—these are the words that magically explain all tribulations and challenges. "The politicians"—this is the formula by which the individual tries to avoid facing the hard facts of life and live in a realm of security and ease.

Thus, one of the first jobs facing those who engage responsibly in local politics is persuading the public to be realistic about community problems and financing. That will be a difficult task. Dreams die hard, especially when it costs money to wake up! Unfortunately, many newcomers to politics fall into the easy pattern of supposing that "honest government" will effectuate substantial tax savings. Sometimes a change of administration and a new point of view do pare costs by a few thousand dollars. Even in such cases the money saved is only a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed in most communities if major civic problems are to be solved intelligently.

Many reform parties have learned this lesson too late. They ride into power on exaggerated notions of what can be eliminated from the expense of government. Then they discover to their horror that inflation has been far more of a villain in the average community than the "politicians." This is very hard to sell to the public after the glittering promises

of the campaign. And another crusade goes down to defeat at the next election.

There is obviously no peculiarly Christian answer to this complex of problems; but we do have one highly significant word that the insights of our faith can speak to all Americans. Life, it tells us, is a very complicated business. It does not lend itself to simple answers. Its crises are not the work of a few bad guys and cannot be resolved by the elimination of any political party or clique. They will yield only to careful analysis and hard work. Moreover, in government as in all other areas of life, the person who tries to get something for nothing is doomed to bitter disappointment and cruel exploitation by unscrupulous men.

Chapter 10

Church and State

In the preceding chapters of this book we have discussed the character of Christian political responsibility. An attempt has been made to show that it roots in the inextricable involvement of man in the social process and in the working of God through the myriad complexities of human relationships. The obligation of the Christian to express his faith in the realm of politics springs not from a sense of *noblesse oblige,* not from a feeling that by so doing he proves his moral sensitivity, but from his conviction that *what* happens in every area of life either assists or resists the will of God for mankind.

It is inevitable that such a discussion will raise in the minds of many readers grave questions about what all of this means for the American doctrine of the separation of church and state. We are a young country with the long memory of youth, and we have not forgotten the circumstances under which some of our most valuable and creative citizens made their painful journey to the New World. Our children still learn in school about the indignities and persecutions that drove the Puritans and Pilgrims from their native shores. We read of the Spanish Inquisition and the terrors that the religious wars of Europe spread among the unhappy masses of

that tortured continent. We are justly proud of our Constitution that forbids the establishment of any church and are determined to adhere to its letter and spirit in this matter.

Naturally, then, the suggestion that one can and should carry the teachings of his Christian faith into concrete political situations is met with a certain misgiving. If men enter the political arena determined to apply their theology to the issues and problems that confront them there, are we not in danger of violating the American tradition and losing all that it was meant to preserve? Quite the contrary. I am persuaded that the only hope of perpetuating that tradition lies in the kind of responsible Christian participation in politics that we have been discussing. Let us try to see why.

First of all we must recall that the founding fathers were concerned to prevent the establishment of any specific *church*. They knew what could happen when a particular *institution* was given an official sanction and special privileges. They feared the power of religious hierarchs who were supported in their authority not by the faith of their followers but by the might of government.

We must remember also that these men lived in a time when Christianity was not merely the faith of the churches but was the cosmology in terms of which most people understood their lives. For the man of the late eighteenth century, theology was closely linked with the natural order. A great deal was taken for granted by even the most irreverent. In fact it is often amusing to pick up the works of some of the radical "atheists" of that time and find that they might qualify for membership in all but the most conservative churches today.

When our Constitutional scholars proscribed the state church, therefore, it did not occur to them that they would be understood as forbidding the mixture of politics and religion. This would have seemed as absurd as prohibiting the association of politics and geography or politics and

economics. One has only to read the basic documents of that historic period to find that the Judeo-Christian world-view undergirded the foundations of the new republic. References to ultimate values are almost always made in specifically theological language. And the great national festivals from Thanksgiving to the Inauguration of the President are celebrations of man's dependence on God.

This expression of religious feeling was not merely pious deceit. Nor did it represent a desire to *use* religion as a bulwark of the new national consciousness. It was grounded, rather, in the realization that man's political institutions *are* inevitably related to his ultimate values and that it is one of the responsibilities of leaders to make the relationship clear. Our founding fathers did not feel that it *would be a wise thing* to express secular concepts in sacred jargon. They felt that it was natural and proper to admit verbally the spiritual assumptions which they were making.

This discussion of the history of our American separation of church and state has not been undertaken in the assumption that it will, in itself, relieve any doubts about the wisdom of mixing religion and politics. Human beings do not base their opinions on legalistic distinctions, nor do they alter them when technical reasons for doing so are advanced. Most Americans have an instinctive attitude toward the church and state relationship that is only indirectly related to the actual intent of the founding fathers. But we all have a sufficiently strong tendency to hide behind technicalities to make it wise to have cleared this one from the table before going on.

The real reason for asserting that Christian responsibility in politics is one of our best defenses against the merger of state and church is one that our founding fathers would have understood and with which they would have sympathized.

Living in a complex social order makes a great many demands upon the individual. He is told many things that

he cannot do, many things that he must do. He is called upon to make every sacrifice, from paying taxes to dying in a war that he really does not understand. In between are myriad daily prohibitions and requirements that inconvenience the body and gall the spirit. One cannot devote one finger of one hand to the burdens of social existence. Often these impositions require both hands and a strong back if they are to be carried at all.

As a result, men find their social roles constantly intruding upon what they take to be the private and important areas of their lives. When this happens, some interpretation of the social obligation must be made. The individual is not willing to pay high taxes just because somebody in Washington says he has to. He will try in every possible way to cheat and deceive if *this* is his only motivation. In like manner, men are reluctant to don uniforms and risk life and limb on the battlefield simply because they are told that Congress has declared war. These demands must be interpreted in terms of values significant enough to justify the sacrifices they require.

Let us be clear about one thing immediately. This is not to suggest that religion should be used as a political tool to get men to do what they should otherwise be unwilling to do. It is to say, rather, that the real basis for accepting the responsibilities of social life honestly and fully *is* a Christian faith in the reality of the social order and the ultimate value of the relationships that make it up. This does not mean that an essentially secular process be hallowed by spiritual symbols and theological rationalizations, but that a context actually rooted in man's created nature and clearly understood only in those terms must be interpreted in this way if it is to make any sense. When the Christian tries to deal with his political values and actions without reference to the faith that underlies every aspect of his life, he is not merely refraining from exploiting religion. He is trying to erect a

facade of so-called "common sense" or utilitarian considerations behind which to respond to his faith unseen.

For the average American, the Christian faith is the real basis of life's meaning, both in individual and social terms. Thus, the effort to interpret the political process in the light of Christian theology is nothing more reprehensible than an effort to make explicit the assumptions underlying our view of politics. A refusal to make this relationship clear at as many points as possible is a deliberate recourse to secular obscurantism. It can only lead to confusion compounded in our everyday thinking about the functioning of democracy.

Unfortunately, however, the failure to relate our political process to its actual spiritual undergirding will not merely produce frustration in efforts at self-analysis and social understanding. There is a far more dangerous prospect ahead if such an obscurantist course is followed. It can be put briefly this way. Our frantic efforts to avoid the remote possibility of a state-church that is felt to be involved in the relating of religion to politics can eventually lead us into the shadow of the *church-state!* Let us look at this statement for a moment.

As indicated above, it is commonly agreed that masses of people will not give their loyalties and lives to any government simply because it sets itself up as the administrator of the community. The natural human tendency is to go along with government where it promises profit to do so and where it threatens pain for refusal. But no regime can long hold power which has no more solid base of authority than this. Political leaders understand clearly that there must be some deeper sense of commitment, some conviction about the "rightness" of submitting to the rule of the state. Without such a conviction, order is impossible except under the most unusual social stability.

The rulers of Soviet Russia learned this after hard experience. The Communists tried to get rid of religion completely. They not only imposed penalties upon Christian institutional

affiliation, but sought to root from the minds of their people all of the myriad inchoate religious impulses of both a high and a degraded character. They wanted rational beings who would work, sacrifice, and die out of purely intellectual dedication to the "people's state." Strenuous efforts were made to eliminate from the Soviet arsenal all of the sanctions of emotional commitment and spiritual concern. For a time it appeared that this might come to pass. But when the first flush of revolutionary ardor had subsided and the Russian people faced the long, hard pull of trying to build a new social order, when tremendous sacrifices of every kind continued to be demanded of all people, then the Communists discovered that these things can only be asked in the name of the deepest values to which men are committed.

As a result, the Soviet State reinstituted a kind of religion —not the Christian faith that had been discarded, however. This new mystique was much more utilitarian and neatly tailored to the needs of the social situation. It was a worship of Holy Mother Russia and her new leaders in the Kremlin. Readers of Communist newspapers in the years leading up to and during World War II report pages and pages of hymns and prayers, all directed toward the loving Stalin and the cult of Russian soil. Many of these secular litanies would shock even a devotee of dime-store religious art by their florid language and abject devotion. Religion had come back in order to provide the basis for social responsibility—but it was a degraded and captive religion.

This same thing happened in other countries during the 1930's. In Germany, Italy, and Spain there came into power political movements which were dramatically pseudo-religious in character. Nazism, Fascism, and the Falange with their blood mythology, leader principle, and whole-souled dedication to the state were efforts to supply a kind of spiritual foundation for social vitality, which the established religions had failed to provide. They offered their followers

ultimate values in terms of which to take up and bear manfully the burdens of citizenship.

These three countries, Germany, Italy, and Spain, differ from Russia at this point in one way. They were states in which there were already highly organized and firmly established religious institutions. All three had some kind of state church which enjoyed, formally or informally, various privileges. Thus, the vacuum which drew in the terrors of political religion was not an absence of institutional Christian life, but the failure of the existing church to relate its faith dynamically to the real problems of the people and their society. In order to preserve its status as a favored institution, the Roman Catholic Church in Italy and Spain had refrained from playing any significantly critical role in the realm of politics. It had neglected its responsibility to speak the judgment of God upon the Italian and Spanish monarchies because these royal houses had made important concessions to the church.

In Germany, the irrelevance of Christianity to politics arose less from the legal status of religion than from the nature of prevailing theologies. Protestantism in the 1920's and 1930's in that part of the world had made the retreat from social relevance that is most easily suggested by reference to the preaching of Karl Barth. God was felt to be so far above human understanding, so high and lifted up, that it was presumption to assert the superiority of any political program or principle in Christian terms. Thus, the established faith failed here also to interpret to the masses the nature of their political problems and responsibilities. The results are still fresh in the minds of all of us.

Here, then, is the situation in which man finds himself. He cannot keep religion and politics separate. This is not a live option. The only choice facing him is whether to relate his *real* religion to the social scene in a critical and redemptive way, or to refuse to do so and see a pseudo-religion sucked in to give authority without judgment to the demands of the

state. State religions do not arise out of the cross fire of socially relevant theologies. They spring, rather, from the failure of traditional faiths to apply themselves vitally to the real world. The surest defense against preferential status for any particular institution is a vigorous program of social and political analysis on the part of all Christian denominations, and all Christian men and women.

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